

Penitent Pardoned :
OR A
DISCOURSE
OF THE
NATURE OF SIN
AND THE
EFFECTS OF REPENTANCE
Under the
PARABOL
OF THE



THE
PENITENT PARDON
OR A
DISCOURSE
OF THE
NATURE OF
AND THE
EFFECTS OF REPENTANCE
PREACHED
P. A. R. A. B. E.
OF THE
Evangelical Socy.

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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THE ESTATE

That though I know it is impossible for

me to be able to do so, yet I am

obliged to do so, and I am

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The EPISTLE

That though I know it is impossible for me to make any proportionable return, yet it is equally impossible for me to omit any opportunity of making my just acknowledgments. And forasmuch as my obligations to your Lordship are as well known to the World as great in themselves, I think it becomes me, and I am persuaded all men (but your Lordship) expect it from me, that I should make some publick expression of my gratitude.

I will therefore do that right to my self to acknowledge, that when I first deliberated about the adventuring these Papers to the Press, it was a principal argument to determine me so to do, because by the Dedication of this part of my Studies to your Lordship's Name, I should have opportunity of performing so just a duty, and of doing honour to so great Vertue and Goodness.

But, My Lord, I must needs confess, that when I came to make reflection upon the Subject, and the tenour of the present Discourse, I was quickly sensible how great an error my zeal was likely to betray me into, in Intitling a work wholly devoted against Detached Systems a Personage of so great Vertue and Sanctity. I have considered your Lordship's name, and I am now of opinion that I ought to have called it by another name.

And this My Lord, refuted my Infol-
lencies, to leave your Lordship to this
plain Fleet of Prudence, Divinity, and
so much the rather, because it is reason-
able to hope, that the directing Word, even
and thoughts, to a great and rare Ex-
ample, of clear and uncorrupted Vertue,
amidst all the disturbances of business,
and the temptations of the pleasurable, fur-
ther will be able to convince all their
objections against the possibility of their
rock goods: and may have as much
efficacy to convince and drive them out
of their follies, as the very Reason of
this Discourse to inuenge their amend-
ment.

And should I now, as well in quali-
fiance of the design of my Task, as of
my gratitude, make a draught of your
Lordship in your full proportions, it
is, endeavour to represent you as great
as your own Vertues added to the No-
bility of your Blood have made you, I
might (if my skill failed me not) exhi-
bit to the World a piece of that perfec-
line perfection wherein the most curious
would not know what to desire, nor the
most envious what to suspect. For such
as not only this whole Kingdom, and
that of Ireland, but several of the Neigh-
bour

DEDICATION

both States and Kingdoms also, can bear witness to your Lordship's steadiness in the Protestant Religion, your Loyalty to your Prince, your Piety, Humility, Justice, of Temperance, Prudence, Courage, and all other great and glorious Qualifications. *Not do I fear by such a Character to*
derive anything upon your Lordship
 since very few of your Lands are with the meer Favours of Fortune, but the Rewards of Vertue, the Acquests of Prudence and Conduct, and won by Wise Counsels, by Generous Resolutions, and Noble Employments; and in such a case it is to be hoped that Men will not have the Impudence to Envy the Effects, when they have not the Bravery to imitate the Causes.

Thus, my Lord, I could satisfy my own Conscience and do right to the World, in setting before them such a Pattern as would at once inflame the Generous, and strike the Stupid and Vicious. But I know your Lordship's Temper, and the Greatness of your Mind too well to think, that hereby I should do an Acceptable Service to your Lordship; wherefore I add no more but my Hearty Prayers, that it will please Almighty God to Bless your
 Lordship.

The EPISTLE, &c.

Lordship, and your most Noble and Pi-
 ous Countess with long Life and Prospe-
 rity, to succeed your Lordship's Studies
 and Endeavours, to the benefit of Religi-
 on, your Prince and Countrey, and to pre-
 serve your hopeful Offspring, that they
 may Uphold your Family, Name and Ho-
 nour to after Generations. This, my Lord,
 is the Constant Duty, and shall be the
 incessant Desire of your very few of your
 most Favour of Fortune, but the Re-
 wards of Virtue, the Acquiescence of Pri-
 vacy, and Contentment, My Lord, by your
 Countess, by Generous Resolutions, and
 Noble Employments; and in such a case
 it is to be hoped that Men will not
 have the Impulse of any the Effects,

when they have not the Bravery to do so.
 1671.

Most Humble Service,
 own Conscience and do right to the World,
 in setting before them such a Pattern as
 would at once inflame the Generous and
 But I know your Lordship's Temper, and the
 Graces of your Mind too well to think
 that hereby I should do an Acceptable
 Service to your Lordship; wherefore I
 add no more but my hearty Prayers, that
 I will please Almighty God to bless your
 Lordship.

THE PREFACE TO THE READER.

It is not unlikely that these Papers may a little surprize some of those into whose hands they may fall. Not so much in regard that this Subject hath been handled by others, for I modestly hope, that notwithstanding anything I have seen or heard of from other Penish Discourse may have its place and use; but because I am aware that some of my Friends who have been privy to my Intentions, and to the course of my Studies, have made me a debtor to the Publick of a Work of a different nature from this which I now present. And I am not unwilling so far to own the Obligation, as to acknowledge that I have now for a good time applyed my thoughts to the Discovery and Explication of the Nature and Reason of Religion in general; and I do hope, if it please God to continue me life and health, that in due time I shall in some good measure acquit the

credit

THE PREFACE

credit of my Friends in that point, and satisfy the expectation of sober men.

But because a Work of that nature and importance requires the most mature deliberation, and exactest discussion; And because I willingly confess my self to be none of those who are as wise at the first prospect of a business, as ever they intend to be; and who, as if they had an intuitive knowledge, presently jump into an Insallibility of Opinion, which they can never after find in their hearts to retract or outgrow: I therefore think it both fittest and safest that a Work of that nature should be digested by several reflections upon it, and ripened by time, which certainly is the best Counsellor in the World. Upon this account, kind Reader, it comes to pass, that instead of a more close and speculative, this plain and practical Discourse is now put into thy hand, and recommended to thy candor; which notwithstanding, if all things be duly considered, is not altogether so remote from the design of the other, as may at first glance be imagined.

For it is very considerable, that the Apostle S. Paul, Gal. 5. 20. reckons harlots amongst the works of the flesh, as if the exorbitancy of mens Opinions were occasioned by the irregularity and violence of their passions, and the sentiments of mens minds distorted and byassed by the savage inclinations of the animal powers.

And

to the READER.

And if we observe the World, we shall find not only very witty men to be oftentimes most absurdly and barbarously vicious, but which is more strange, we shall see very good men of very good Opinions; and on the contrary, very good and virtuous persons under most silly and despicable persuasions. By which it plainly appears, that reason and the right notion of things do not so much govern the World, as either natural propensity, or a false policy in the last mentioned case; or else interest and humour in the other.

From whence it comes to pass, that as the Platonists said, *Quid in corpore, licet a se esse.* One may calculate what religious pretensions most men will be of, from the contemplation of their temper or interests.

For so we shall see a swaggering Elector become an easy Proselyte to the Hobbian Philosophy; a licentious Voluptuary presently commences an Epicurean Abbot; and an un-devout temporal sets up for a Theist; or something worse.

Upon consideration of all which, I am of Opinion that the most successful way of recovering the generality of men to right notions of Religion, and putting them under the power of them, is to instruct Physicians, who when the Head is ill affected, apply not immediately to that (which tho' it be the principal part,

THE PREFACE

part, is seldom primarily affected) but to the Stomach, or Hypochondria, or some other inferior faculty which influence upon it, and make it bear a share of the consequences of their respective disorders.

Agreeably whereunto I have endeavoured in this Treatise to strike at Dabachery, as at the Root of most of the calamities of Religion; and which doth not more deform mens lives, than distort their reason; and either stifle or pervert the very principles of their Mind and Conscience. And though I will not be guilty of Libelling the Age we live in, by ripping up the disorders thereof, thereby to raise the value of this small performance; yet I am certain of these two things, that I have both designed publick good in this undertaking, and not varied from the substance of that which I have told thee was my first projection.

But dismissing all further considerations of that kind, as for the present discourse, I have neither such a fondness to my own production, nor am so much a stranger, either to the humours of men, or the condition of the Times, but that I think it had been much easier to have gratified the curiosity of both, some other way: Notwithstanding, since it is apparent that there is now-a-days more light than heat, and less seriousness than either; and consequently more need that the principles of Conscience should be stirred up, than any
notion

motion started, or controversy moved: I am
therefore apt to hope this Labour will not seem
unseasonable; or however, I am well content to
be one of those that had rather save one Soul
than please ten thousand.

I know there is nothing so serious but may
be exposed to Drollery by Atheistical Wits,
who have had the impudence not to spare the sa-
cred Scripture it self: and I know the World is
never free from a sort of idle invidious persons,
who finding it a far easier matter to find faults
than to mend, carp at every thing that is made
publick under this only security, that by rea-
son of their own unprofitableness and sloth, no
body can find any thing of theirs wherein to
pay them in their own coin.

Neither of these sorts of men will I trouble
my self about, and as for wise men I know they
will see many imperfections in this Book, but
they will also pardon them; especially consi-
dering that no man can think or write in all
things just to the gust of another, but only those
that have mercenary Pens, and parasitical
prostituted Consciences.

It may be, some of those whom I design to
profit by this Discourse, will think they ob-
serve some very necessary things omitted, or
but slightly touched upon; such as especially
concerning faith in Christ Jesus, &c. To which
my answer is, that I would as gladly, and as
copiously have discoursed on that Point as any
other,

The PREFACE, &c.

other; but either the nature of my Design, or indeed the series of the Parable led me thereto.

Upon the whole matter I have endeavoured to do good to as many as I could, and to give offence to none; neither to the Jew nor to the Greek, nor to the Church of God: If any thing seem obscure in any one part of this Book, I am persuaded that he that reads on shall find it cleared up in some other place. But if any thing be undoubtedly destroyed (which God forbid) that is, either not agreeable to the Doctrine of the Church of England, or to the sense of wise and good Men, I wish it unsaid, and hereby retract it under my Hand.

THE

THE

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THE

THE
PARABLE
OF THE
PRODIGAL SON.

S. L U K E, CHAP. XV.

Ver. 11. **A** Certain man had two Sons:

12. And the Younger of them said to his Father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

13. And not many days after, the Younger Son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far Countrey, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

14. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15. And he went and joined himself to a Citizen of that Countrey; and he sent him into his fields to feed Swine.

16. And he would fain have

filled his belly with the husks that the Swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

17. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my Father have Bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger?

18. I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father I have sinned against heaven and before thee,

19. And am no more worthy to be called thy Son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20. And he arose, and came to his Father. But when he was yet a great way off, his Father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

21. And

The Parable of the Prodigal Son.

21. And the Son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son.

22. But the Father said to his servants, Bring forth the best Robe, and put it on him, and put a Ring on his hand, and Shoes on his feet.

23. And bring hither the fatted Calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry.

24. For this my Son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

25. Now his Elder Son was in the field: and as he came, and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

26. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

27. And he said unto him, Thy Brother is come; and thy Father hath killed the fatted

Calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

28. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his Father out, and intreated him.

29. And he answering, said to his Father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment, and yet thou never gavest me a Kid, that I might make merry with my Friends:

30. But as soon as this thy Son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted Calf.

31. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

32. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy Brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

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EFFICACY of REPENTANCE,
Under the
Parable of the Prodigal Son.

PART I.

CHAP. I.

The peculiar Excellency of this Parable of our Saviour; and touching Parables in general.

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- § II. *The Obscurity of the Gentile Oracles, Old Philosophers, and Ancient Writers of all kinds. Of the Allegories of the Old Testament, and the Figurative way of our Saviour in the New.*
- § III. *The Reasons of the Pagan Obscurity, and of the Figures of the Old Testament; especially of our Saviour's so much use of Parables.*
- § IV. *Of the Danger of Allegorical Interpretations: the peculiar advantage and security of doing it in this Parable: the Caution of the Author therein.*

§ I. **I** Verily perswade my self that there is no intelligent person who shall happen to read the passage of Holy Scripture now before us, but will presently, and at the first prospect of it, take notice of a very beautiful and affecting scene of things represented to him: wherein it will be very hard for him to determine, whether the variety of matter, just proportions of the particulars, or decent and natural order of things, do more vie with each other, or more equally conspire to fill his imagination, and affect his heart. For in the very letter of this Parable he will see described, first, the Benignity, Indulgence and Condescension of a Father to his Son, together with the Folly and Licentiousness of Youth; then the gradual progress and sad catastrophe of a course of debauchery; after this the usual misgivings of heart and change of mind upon such change of affairs, the serious reflexions upon, and late repentance of such follies: Then again a description of Parental affections; the exoratableness of a Father upon his Son's submission; the profuseness of his kindness upon his reformation; and, lastly, the transports of his joy upon his plenary recovery. And indeed the most powerful

erfull

Chap. I. of this Parable.

erfull passions of humane nature are here drawn with that admirable skill as to equal the very life it self.

It was not therefore pronounced at adventure by the Learned *Hugo Grotius*, but agreeably to his usual sagacity, when he said, *This Parable of the Prodigal Son is the most remarkable of all those which were delivered by our Saviour, as being the most passionate and affecting, set out and adorned with the most lively colours, and beautifull similitudes.* All which is discernible upon the most transient glance upon it. But he that, not contenting himself with so superficial a view, shall defix his thoughts, and maturely consider the intendment of our Saviour in this Figure, will partly by the Occasion upon which it was delivered, and partly by the thread of the Parable it self, most assuredly be led into an apprehension of some greater mystery therein contained. For taking his view from such station, and thence attentively surveying the whole scope and design of this Scripture, he will find in the general, that herein is traced out the journey from *Egypt* (a state of servitude) to the Land of Promise, through a troublesome and disconsolate wilderness; or the passage from the brink of Hell to the gates of Heaven. More particularly he will observe the unhappy onset and beginnings, the crooked and troublesome proceedings, the dangerous precipices, and the horrid and fatal mischiefs of a sinfull course, graphically described: He will also descry the direct, but laborious, the sorrowfull, but certain way of recovery: And lastly, the glorious triumph, the comfortable condition, and the sure station of him that hath happily conquered the aforesaid difficulties, and is arrived at the serene top of Vertue; together with the general

Inter omnes Christi Parabolas, hac sans est eximia, plena affectuum, & pulcherrimis picta coloribus.
H. Grot. in v. 20.

applause, and universal Jubilee of Heaven and Earth upon such an atchievement.

And in confidence that all these things are pointed at, and intended in the scene before us, (as I do not doubt but will be evident by and by,) I do design to take occasion from hence to discourse somewhat fully and practically of these three very important particulars: (*viz.*)

1. Of the nature of Sin, and the mischiefs of a wicked course.

2. Of the nature and admirable efficacy of Repentance.

Lastly, Of the exorableness of the Divine Majesty, and the unexpressible benignity and graciousness with which he entertains returning sinners.

And, provided the management prove answerable to the design, I cannot in the least mistrust the acceptableness of a work of this nature to any sort of men who have so much seriousness and manly sense in them, as to value things in proportion to their real usefulness; forasmuch as there is not that subject to be treated of, which comes more close and home to the greatest concerns of all mankind. For,

In the first place, There are scarcely any so prodigiously vain, as not to acknowledge themselves to be sinners: And what can be of more use to him that makes that acknowledgment, than to understand what it is which makes Sin to be sinfull, what gives it its malignity, and makes guilt inseparably to adhere to it, what are the several states of sin and sinners, and especially what is the natural course and tendency, the sudden growth and unhappy progress of sin? Since hereby his conscience being inlightned, will be both better able to

make

Chap. I. *of this Parable.*

5

make just reflections upon what is past, and also be made more cautious and diligent for the time to come.

And although it be true that every man hath not run the same mad risk of sin which is here decyphered in the Prodigal Son: Yet as that is owing to the especial providence and preventing grace of God, where-ever the case is such; so that happy person will, by observing the wild extravagances, the extreme follies and horrid mischiefs, which others incur before conversion, be the more provoked to adore the Divine Goodness in his own preservation.

Again, What can be of more moment to those that are apprehensive of the Majesty and Purity of God, of the holiness of his Laws, of the certainty of a Judgment to come, and withall are sensible of the frailty of humane nature, and conscious of their own many and great miscarriages, than to behold the nature of Repentance plainly described, and to be instructed in the methods of making good their retreat, of recovering themselves, and successfully recommending their deplorable state and condition to the Divine Philanthropy and mercy?

Lastly, What can be more ravishingly comfortable to a contrite sinner, than to understand the efficacy of true Repentance, to see a door of hope open to the worst of sinners upon their coming to themselves, and returning to their duty, to be assured of the hearty compassions of the Divine Majesty, to see the arms of the Almighty open to receive and embrace returning Children; and all this as it were in perspective, lively represented?

B 3

§ II. But

§. II. But in regard it is a Parable which we have in hand, I think my self obliged (in order to the laying a good foundation of what we shall afterwards build upon it) here in our entrance to premise something briefly, first, touching the ancient use of this Schematical and Figurative way of expression, and the Reason of such usage; secondly, touching the Explication and Application of such kind of discourses.

And for the first of these, I cannot reasonably imagine, that any man who shall peruse these Papers, should be so great a stranger to all that hath past in former times, as not to be aware, that it was the general custom of Wise men of old, to deliver their Sentiments after this manner and in such a style; and this not only in meer humane and common Writings, but even in Sacred Writ it self.

To say nothing of the famous Oracles of the *Gentiles*, which in other circumstances as well as in this of Mysteriousness, have been observed to Ape and imitate those of the true God: And to pass by the ancient Poets, who were reputed as both the Divines and the Philosophers of the Ages in which they lived, and who were well known to have affected an Oracular obscurity, as much as the Oracles affected their way of verifying: If we take notice of the ancient Proverbs of Nations, which are supposed to carry the marks of the wisdom of their respective times and people, these we find for the most part obscure and *Ænigmatical*. And for the ancient Philosophers, and men of renown, such as the Wise men of *Greece*, distinctively so called, or such as *Pythagoras*, *Socrates*, &c. who were no whit inferiour to
the

Chap. I. *in general.*

the former, he knows nothing of them that is not sensible, not only of accidental, but also of designed obscurity in their writings and sayings.

As for the Sacred Writings of the Old Testament, though with all good men I worthily adore that Divine Spirit which made choice of and directed the Pen-men of Holy Scripture; and readily acknowledge both the plainness and perspicuity thereof in the necessary rules of life, without which it could not have answered the ends of the Divine Wisdom in the enditing of it; and also that wheresoever it is abstruse, it is as far from phantasy and affected obscurity, as the Pagan Oracles were notoriously guilty thereof: Notwithstanding it cannot be denied, but that as well the Prophets as other holy Pen-men do frequently make use of Metaphors, Allegories, and other Schematical forms, which must needs be attended with competent obscurity, these being as it were a vail drawn over the face of Divine Truth. Hence it is that Solomon makes *the words of the wise*, and *their dark sayings*, to be two expressions denoting the same thing: For, as he in another place speaks, *their discourses are like Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver*; that is, besides a truth and beauty in the outside or case of the letter, they had a more rich and precious meaning within. And accordingly we may observe the Apostles of our Lord, in the New Testament, frequently to fix upon and pursue a mystical sense of some of those passages in the Old Testament, which would to an ordinary Reader have seemed most strictly and literally to be understood.

Yet I do not think this will prove a sufficient warrant for *Philo*, or some other Jewish Writers, to turn all those sacred Records into Allegory:

Nor that it will altogether excuse those ancient Learned Christians from all mistake, who thought there was no way of reaching the full sense of the Old Testament, but by tracing a perpetual Metaphor, and looking every-where beyond the letter.

However their practice makes it sufficiently evident, that it was the common sense of Antiquity, that the style of those Writings was mysterious and figurative, which is enough for my present purpose.

§. III. If now we proceed to enquire into the Reasons of this usage; so far as concerns the *Pagan* Mysteries, we may say with justice enough, that it was their interest to hide those things from the light, that could not endure the trial of it: and for a great many of their Philosophers, they designed more to procure a veneration to their own persons, than to benefit the world; and chose rather to seem wise themselves, than endeavoured to make others to be so. Or at least the not improbable account which *S. Clement of Alexandria* gives of this matter may satisfy us, whose words are these, *The manner and style in which the Greek Philosophers handled their Philosophy was like to that of the Hebrews, dark and enigmatical: for from them, whom they esteemed and called Barbarians, did those admired Sages (as that Learned Author shews at large) borrow or steal most of that which was remarkable amongst them: and then no wonder if they took the Casket with the Jewel; the manner of delivery, as well as the matter they delivered.*

*Ο ὅτι τοῖς
παρὰ
αὐτοῖς φι-
λοσόφους
Ἐβραῖοις
ἐκείνοις μα-
κάροις.
Clem. A-
lex. Strom.
lib. 1.

But now if our curiosity lead us farther, to consider, what should be the reasons why the Sacred Writers themselves observed this style, there are several things may be noted as of great moment in the case. Namely,

1. For-

1. Forasmuch as the Divine Wisdom saw it fit in the infancy of the world, to exhibit a discovery of his mind and will, suitable to the capacity of the Men and the Age, reserving the more full and adequate delivery of himself to the fulness of time, when the minds of men, having been opened and enlarged by degrees, should by those previous applications be prepared and made capable of those brighter beams of Divine Truth, which he ultimately intended to display: Hereupon it was necessary, that the Prophets and holy Pen-men should be directed in such sort, as that on the one hand, and in the letter, their discourses should condescend to the present dispensation; but yet withall should on the other hand reflect and glance upon, and give some hints of, that which was principally intended, and hereafter to be clearly revealed. From whence it must needs come to pass, (both the aforesaid purposes being joyntly to be pursued) that there must be a frequent use of Figures and Allegories, and consequently some Obscurity.

2. But then, secondly, Because it was not the mind of God, wholly to cloud and obscure the glories that were afterwards to appear, he ordered it so, that such a thin veil drawn over the matter should not more set off its beauty, than stir up the attention of the mind, and allure men to a very diligent inquisition. For, as much as utter obscurity of the matter, or absolute impossibility of accomplishing what is designed, to discourage and blast both enquiry and endeavour: so much doth moderate and not insuperable, either difficulty or obscurity, inflame a generous mind to comprehend and conquer; and as none but fools reach at plain impossibilities, so none but

but ignoble and little spirits are beaten off by meer difficulty. Thus in effect this way of writing became a *Lapis Lydius*, or Touchstone of minds, fit for and capable of excellent improvements. And this is the very account which S. *Justin* the Philosopher and Martyr gives of this matter. *The Prophets* (saith he) *did cover the things they delivered under Types and Parables, in-
somuch that it was not easie for every one to un-
derstand many of those things which they spoke of,
and the rather because they would exercise the dili-
gence and study of those that applied themselves to
their instructions.*

Justin in
dial. cum
Tryphone
Judeo.

Ὅσα ἔπει-
οι Περὶ
ταῖς παρ-
εχοαῖς καὶ
τύποις ἀ-
πὸ πάλυ-
ψαν, οἱ
μὴ βιάσας τὰ πλεῖστα καὶ ἀπὸ πολλῶν νοηθῆναι, καὶ πολλοὺς τὴν ἐν αὐταῖς ἀ-
λήθειαν, οἷ καὶ ποιεῖν τὰς ζήτωντας εὐρεῖν καὶ μαθεῖν.

Again, thirdly, this way of expression recom-
mended it self upon this account, that whatsoever
was represented in this Parabolical way, was apt
to insinuate more closely, and work more power-
fully upon the affections. Forasmuch as in this
case the mind was not only addressed to, by the
meer dint of reason, but truth was in a manner
made visible, and set off in such lively colours,
that the imagination being impregnated, the pas-
sions were easily carried along too. To which
add, that hereby also the memory was exceed-
ingly fortified; for such things as we feel and see,
or which our imaginations have an express image
of, and our affections relish, those things always
stick by us. All which considerations laid toge-
ther, will amount to a satisfaction of the reason-
ableness of that figurative obscurity, which we ob-
serve in the writings of the Old Testament, and
may in part also extend to whatever is of that
kind

kind in the New. But yet perhaps there may remain some difficulty, why our Saviour who came to make a full, clear and ultimate discovery of the mind of God to the sons of men, should think fit to use this figurative way of expression at so great a rate, as that the Evangelist saith, *without a parable spake he not unto them.* Touching which I have these things further to say.

First, by what hath been said already it appears, the people of the *Jews*, amongst whom our Saviour came, had been always trained up in an Allegorical way, and had it in such esteem, that they thought no man fit to teach that could not handsomely conceal and shade his sense, *si quis nov-rit uti perplexiloquio, loquatur, sin minus taceat.* And therefore by an admirable dexterity in the use of Parables, he marvellously recommended his discourses to the gust of that people: and had it not been that they were filled with intolerable prejudices against him for the meanness of his outward appearance, and upon other such like accounts, they must of necessity have had his wisdom in great veneration.

But besides this general account, our Saviour himself gives us a peculiar reason of this his practice, especially upon that kind of people, in these words, *Matt. 13. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. To you it is given (speaking to his Disciples) to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. But to them (meaning the generality of the Jews) it is not given, for whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath. Therefore speak I to them in Parables, because they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled* the

the Prophecy of Isaiah, saying, bearing ye shall bear, &c. As if our Saviour had said, " You my Disciples who are of an humble and docible temper, and are content to use means, and to resort to me for the understanding of such things as I deliver; to you it shall be no disadvantage that they are clothed in Parables: for (besides that I am ready to interpret every thing to you,) my discourses are so ordered, as to become plain and intelligible to such unprejudicate minds; the truth will shine through the veil, and the shadow shall guide you to the body and substance. But as for these proud and conceited Pharisees, that are transported with their own prejudices, and will neither understand nor practise things plainly delivered; for the just hardning of them, and such as they are, I deliver my self in such a manner as will not readily be apprehended by men of their temper. They shall choak themselves with the husks, whilst you feed upon the kernel. Much like to this is the account which Iamblicus gives of the obscurity of Pythagoras; saith he, Pythagoras studied some obscurity in his dictates, to the intent that those only who were vertuously disposed and so prepared for his notions, might be benefited by his discourses, but as for others, (they as Homer saith of Tantalus) should be surrounded with such things as were in themselves very desirable, but not be able to touch or tast them.

Συνεπι-
κρύπτει-
διαι αὐτὸν
πολὺ
ἤ ληρο-
μέων, ὅ-
πως οἱ μὲν
καθαροὶ
ψαλιδύ-
μενοι· σα-
φῶς αὐτοῖς
ματλαμ-

Σάντων· οἱ δ' (ὡς περὶ Ὀμηροῦ φησὶ τὸ Τάνταλον) ἀπὸ τῶν παρρη-
των αὐτοῖς ἐν μίσθῳ ἢ ἀκαταμάτων, καὶ μηδὲν ἀπολαύοντες.

To which I add in the last place, this way of Parables, which our Saviour made such use of, in many

many cases came more home to men's consciences, and carried more conviction with it, than any other more express and direct way of speaking. For the Parables were commonly taken, *è medio*, from the common affairs of life, and grounded upon experience or acknowledged maxims: and now whilst men readily acknowledged that in the *Protasis* or former part of the Parable (not knowing whither it tended, or what the *anecdosis* would be,) they were utterly surprized and confounded afterwards by the patness of the application. For though they could have been willing to have disallowed what they saw touched their concern; yet having already unawares granted that from which it would unavoidably follow, they were intangled in a net and could neither go backward nor forward: for if they went forward, they came over to him and quitted their principles; and to go backward, was basely to deny their own concessions. Thus it fared with *David* in the famous Parable of *Nathan*, upon occasion of the Adultery with *Bathsheba* and Murther of her Husband *Uriah*, the King presently condemns the fact, so long as he knew not the Malefactor, and therefore when the Prophet came over him, saying, *thou art the man*, he was left without all evasion or apology, and so brought to repentance. And in like manner the same *David* was intrapped by a like Parable, which *Joab* put into the mouth of the Woman of *Tekoah*, for the recalling of *Absalom*. And after this rate our Saviour several times circumvents the Pharisees, and especially in this present Parable, as will evidently appear anon, when we come to open the occasion of it; but so much for the first Point.

Illi (ex antiquis) qui simpliciter, & demonstranda rei causâ loquebantur, parabolis referti sunt, quas existimo necessarias, ut imbecillitatis nostræ adminicula, & ut discen-tem & audientem in rem præsentem adducant.

Sen. ep. 59.

2 Sam. 12.

2 Sam. 14.

§. IV. 2. Touching the Second, *viz.* the application of this kind of discourses, I am well aware that sundry Judicious Divines both of former and later times, have complained of great mistakes in doctrine, and many mischiefs done to religion by the too curious and particular Interpretations of Parabolical passages of Scripture: and not without cause; for it is too easie to observe those that having taken their rise from the Letter of a Text, have soared so aloft in a strain of allegory, that they have gone a pitch beyond all sober sense, at least out of the ken of all ordinary understandings, and strained a metaphor so far that they have broken all in pieces. Others have forced similitudes to run of all four, and upon some obscure and far-fetched resemblance have given countenance to their own dreams and phancies, and represented the Holy Spirit of God as intimating what he never intended. I remember also what an acute person of the last Age pronounced, that it was not to be called an exposition, but a divination, which departed from the letter; and he that used such liberty was rather a law-maker than an interpreter of laws, and might dictate whatsoever he pleased at this rate. All this is well said. But then on the other side it must be acknowledged too, that at least the general design and greater lines of a sacred Parable are argumentative, otherwise our Saviour would not have made such use of them as he did, nor would they have had that effect they had frequently upon the hearers: and if this were not true, a great part of the Gospels would be only Romance to

Lord Ba-
ton's Ad-
vance.

Allegories
in true
Theology
always in-
clude ar-
guments
of propor-
tion, and
so are as
firm as a-
ny Geo-
metrical demonstration.

Dr. Tho. Jackson on the Creed, lib. 8.

amuse

amuse us, and not Doctrine to instruct us. And although it be true that such proof will not be convictive upon some kind of men, yet that is no objection in the case, forasmuch as no other, the most direct proofs, will serve the turn with some persons: nor was it the design of God, as I have intimated already, to put a flat necessity upon men, and to render it impossible for them not to believe; it is sufficient to the intention of the Holy Scripture that an honest mind, may, by considering the occasion, and comparing therewith the make and fabrick of a Parable, discern what is drove at through the whole.

But besides, I think this Parable before us hath peculiar advantages of all other, and that it was designed by the wisdom of our Saviour, not only to fit the occasion in general, but also to carry a resemblance in particular, and graphically to describe the very nature and manner of the thing he was discoursing of. And that which confirms me in this persuasion (besides the natural accord of things, and wonderfull easiness of application without force or straining) is, that I observe men of the greatest learning and judgment both ancient and modern, and who are apparently the most free and untainted with the aforesaid humour of Allegorizing, to follow the traces of the figure with a moral application quite through this Parable. Out of the great number of which I will select only two for instances, *S. Jerome* amongst the ancients, and *Hugo Grotius* for the modern. The former of which, at the intreaty of no less a Man than Pope *Damasus*, makes a particular interpretation of this Parable in all the branches of it, which is the substance of his 146. Epistle, whose

Videtur autem praeter similitudinem totius, etiam partibus inesse τὸ ἀλληγορούμενον.
exposi-

exposition I have for the most part followed in this present discourse. The other, I mean the Judicious *Hugo Grotius*, to the words I lately cited from him, for the excellency of this Parable subjoyns these following, (*in ver. 22.*) Besides a general resemblance of the thing, it seems to carry on the allegory through the particular parts also. And again a while after, *Though* (saith he) we are not solicitously to inquire for a moral meaning of every passage in these allusive discourses; yet in this Parable where the phrases made use of are by other Scriptures interpreted to such a particular sense, it is unreasonable to neglect it.

*Sicut non
anxiè con-
quirenda
sunt ai
ἀλληγορί-
αι, in par-
tibus com-
paratio-
num; ita hic non negligenda, cum eas aliorum locorum comparatio sug-
gerat.*

These reasons and authorities together, will (I doubt not) justify a particular application of this Parable: Notwithstanding, that there may be the fullest security against the mischiefs specified in the entrance of this point, I will take care that in the following discourse, no doctrine shall be obtruded upon the bare warrant of similitude or figurative resemblance, but whatsoever shall be delivered, shall be both grounded upon some express and literal Texts of Scripture, and attested by the consent of the Ancient Fathers.

And now (these things premised) I proceed more closely to pursue my purpose in the particular handling of the Parable.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

The occasion and exposition of
this Parable

The CONTENTS.

§. I. The adversaries of our Saviour's Doctrine contradict each other, some accusing it of too great difficulty, others as a Doctrine of licentiousness, the occasion of this latter misprision of it amongst the Gentiles, is a fabulous story of Constantine's conversion, the occasion of the Jews misapprehension.

§. II. Three ranks of Jews, a maxim of their built upon that distinction, the false sense they had of the Mosaic Covenant, which things in special gave rise to their calumnies against our Saviour's Doctrine and Practice, from which he vindicates himself by this Parable (and is to be distinguished from the literal paraphrase upon the Parable).

§. III. A literal paraphrase upon the Parable.

§. IV. The true interpretation of the Parable, who is meant by the elder, and who by the younger brother, the parts of the Parable, and of the ensuing Discourse, all being applied to our Saviour's Doctrine.

IT is a necessary rule amongst all Expositors to look attentively on the occasion, and from the rise to judge of the scope and tendency of the discourse: And this is most especially requisite to be done in the interpretation of figurative passages, in regard there is nothing so like but it is also unlike, nor so resembles any one thing but in some respects it may resemble another; and therefore here, like those that sail in a narrow channel,

where the Stars or the Card are too general directors, they are forced to fall by coasting, as they call it; so must we in the explication of a Parable (where there is not always to be expected a determinate and necessary sense of every phrase, as in more direct discourses,) govern our selves by the general aim, and be sure to let out right at first from the design of it.

Now in order to the discovery of the true occasion of this Parable, it is of use to note, That as it was the lot of our Saviour himself when he was arraigned by the Jews, to be accused by such as agreed no better amongst themselves than with the truth; and whose several testimonies more impeached the credit of each other than pressed him against whom they were suborned. So it hath often fared with his Doctrine and Religion, to be accused of things inconsistent with each other; in so much that commonly the several imputations mutually confuting each other, have jointly vindicated (instead of aspersing) Christianity.

The special instance which I am now concerned to assign of this matter, is, that the same institution hath by different persons been accused of difficulty and facility; as an intolerable burthen by some, as a doctrine of looseness and licentiousness by others. The former of these accusers have commonly been a sort of loose pretenders to Christianity, who because the Gospel requires that we love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and soul, and strength, that we live in all good conscience both towards God and man, that we restrain not only the outward acts of sin, but subdue the very passion and inclination thereto; and upon such-like accounts cry out *dura sermo*; that it is a strict and severe Law; and if this be Evangelical obedience,

obedience, it is impossible, and who then can be saved? And to help themselves out of these difficulties, they run into wild persuasions, that either *Christ Jesus himself* (who delivered this institution) must in his own person so perform it instead of all that are to be saved, as to excuse them the doing it, or else God must be pleased by miracle to over-bear them into the performance of it. But since these men profess Christianity, I leave them to be silenced by the express declaration of our Saviour, *Matt. xi. 10. My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

The contrary sort are those I am more concerned in at present, namely such as reproach Christianity as a doctrine of ease and looseness. Touching whom it is plain by the former objections, that this second sort of men must be absolute strangers to the tenour of the Religion they thus accuse, *i. e.* they must be either *Jews* or *Gentiles*.

For the *Pagans*, they either hearing that Faith was insisted upon as the prime qualification of a Christian, looked therefore upon the whole Religion as *but* a bare credulity, a meer facility of mind, or a supine abandoning ones self to the dictates and suggestions of others; or else considering that this Religion neither required nor practised the troublesome and costly sacrifices then in use amongst other people, nor so much as made any account of those nice observances, and very austere rites, that were in great reputation with all the world besides, judged it therefore to be a very cheap and easy thing to be a Christian: Or lastly, observing that many who were conscious of having lived wickedly heretofore, betook themselves to, and found both cure and comfort in this institution, they thereupon concluded it to be an Apy-

lum and Sanctuary to looseness and debauchery.

Upon some or all of these accounts, the *Pagans* were generally abused into the afore said misprision of Christianity, touching the third and last of which stumbling-blocks I think it will not be unacceptable to the Reader, that I rehearse a famous story from the Ecclesiastical Historians to this effect.

When the great *Constantine* to his own immortal glory, and the great advantage of Christianity, espoused that Religion; the *Pagans*, to slur him and Religion together, devised this tale of him. That he having basely murdered his brother *Crispus*, and others of his near kindred, and feeling some remorse in his conscience for so great Barbarities, applied himself to *Sopater* the Philosopher and Successor of *Plinius*, to be directed by him to some ~~remedy~~ or expiation. But *Sopater* tells him, that Philosophy afforded no remedy in so desperate a case. He then (saith the Story) goes to the Christian Bishops to get ease to his guilty and affrighted conscience; and they readily receiving and encouraging him that a little Baptismal water would wash out all that stain, and ease the smart; he hereupon finding this a Religion wherein a Man might reconcile the gratification of the most exorbitant passions with a quiet mind, became a Christian.

Vid. So-
zom. Hist.
lib. 3. cap. 9.
Evagr. lib.
3. cap. 41.

Theodoret who relates this Fable, thinks (as well he might) that it concerned his profession of Christianity to shew the falshood of it. And therefore after he had first retorted it upon the *Pagans* themselves, shewing that if it had been true, it was no more than had been allowed amongst them in the case of their famous *Hercules*; he afterwards demonstrates the utter absurdity and impossibility

of

of the fiction, in regard it might appear by Authentick records, that *Crispus* was alive long after *Constantine* became Christian, surviving to the twentieth year of his reign, and subscribing laws with him. Notwithstanding the Story sufficiently evidences, that the *Pagans* had entertained such a sinister conceit of Christianity, as that it favoured vice and licentiousness, and thereupon were prejudiced against it.

But to pass over their gross misapprehensions, and come to the *Jews*, they also had alike dishonourable opinions of the Christian institution as a doctrine of looseness. And these they seem to have taken up, partly upon occasion that they observed our Saviour to lay no great stress upon their idle traditions, which they were infinitely scrupulous about; partly also because though they could not but observe that he was a most holy and diligent observer of the Law, yet in some cases, as that of the Sabbath, and such like, he interpreted it *ex æquo & bono*, and made the letter submit to the reason and sense of it, whereupon they cried out he dissolved the law. Neither was it a small accession to their suspicions, that upon all occasions he exposed the sanctimoniousness of their admired *Pharisees*, whose reputation was so great with them, that they were ready to think all Religion was struck at, when the inward rottenness of those painted sepulchres was discovered. But above all they seem to have been confirmed in this ill opinion of *Christ Jesus* and his doctrine, when they noted that whereas the grave and demure *Pharisees*, the learned *Scribes*, the chief Priests and Rulers, and all the zealots of their Religion stood at a distance, and defied this new doctrine, those that resorted to our Saviour, and became his disciples,

were generally persons not only of mean quality, but had been many of them formerly infamous for their life and conversation, for so we find in the first and second verses of this Chapter, *Then drew near unto him all the Publicans and Sinners for to hear him, and the Scribes and Pharisees murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them;* whereupon our Saviour takes up this and other Parables in this Chapter.

For the more clear understanding of which occasion, and consequently of the scope of the whole Parable, these things following are to be considered.

Arias Mon.
tanus in e-
lucid.

§. II. 1. That the Jews (as to the affair of Religion) were wont to distinguish themselves into three ranks or classes, the first and most eminent amongst them were the *Pharisees* or *Separatists*; (as their name from פָּרָשִׁים properly imports) called also frequently in their own writings חֲבֵרִים, which we may appositely render *Frieries* or *Fraternities*: A very precise and strict sort of men in their way, as who obliged themselves to the most strict measures of ritual observance, fasting twice a week, frequent and curious in their washings, long in their prayers, broad in their phylacteries, demure in their behaviour, stately in their mein, starched and stiff in every thing. They had a custom of disfiguring their faces to seem pale and mortified: And as they had artificial faces, so they had consciences too, wondrous tender and sensible of little punctilio's, and the veriest trifle that was out of the road of their sect, but brawny and insensible of the highest violations of the laws of God. Their Religion was a kind of clock-work drawn up by the hand, and moving in a certain order, but with-

out
out

out life or feast. In short, they had all the outward shew of admirable men, but nothing else: their devotions being calculated to take men, not to please God, and to better their interest and reputation with the people, not to benefit the world, or improve their own tempers. However what by their own confident pretensions, and what by the credulity of those that take all for gold that glisters, these men obtained the reputation of the first rate of Religionists.

In the second rank were those which were called *Sapientum discipuli*, the disciples of the wise men; these did not constitute a peculiar sect as the former, neither did they oblige themselves to all the punctuality and phantasmery which the other did, but they were such as applied themselves diligently to the study of the law, and governed themselves by the traditions of the great Rabbins, and by such interpretations as they had been pleased to make upon the Text. These I take it, are those who are commonly called by the name of Scribes in the New Testament, and sometimes Lawyers also, for that those two names were of the same signification, seems to be evident by *S. Luke* III. 44, 45. When our Saviour had a great while inveighed against the Pharisees, and at last had joyned the Scribes with them, *Then answered one of the Lawyers and said, Master, now thou reprovest us also.* And these men whether called Lawyers, or Scribes, or Wise men, though they distinguished themselves by no peculiar garb and cognizance as the former, nor made a sect in Religion, yet because they devoted themselves to the study of their religious writings, were looked upon as conservators of their Religion, and attributed a great opinion of sanctity. Insomuch that there is a well-

known saying amongst the *Jews*, That if but two men were to be saved, or have a part in the other world, the one would certainly be a Pharisee, and the other a Scribe. And in relation to this opinion of theirs, our Saviour saith to his disciples, *Matth. 5. 20. Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* i. e. if you be my disciples indeed, you must outstrip those two admired sorts of men, as much as they are supposed to outgo all others.

The third rank were ordinary *Jews*, called in contempt *populus terre*, the people of the land, who lived a common life without any nicety of observation, or peculiar note of distinction. These men might perhaps live honestly, and it may be also exceed both the former in real virtues of the soul; but forasmuch as they exacted of themselves nothing singular, nor affected any curiosity, they had no remark upon them, but were valued much after the rate that we commonly signifie when we say a good honest moral well-meaning man.

But now for such as were found guilty of living in any open and scandalous sins, such as fornication, and the like; these were held (and that deservedly enough) in no rank of Religion, and amongst these they reckoned Publicans also; that is, such as being native *Jews*, became instruments of the *Roman* power, collecting tribute for them of their own Nation, and both the one and the other of these were in no other estimation than Heathens, for so we find Publicans and Sinners, Heathens and Publicans, commonly joyned together under the same brand of reproach and contempt in the Gospel.

How is it that these three ranks of Religionists are mentioned in the Gospel?

1. It is to be observed in consequence of the former distinction, that whereas for the third sort of men of whom they had no great esteem, it was accounted no wonder that they being *filiis terre*, men of a meer secular character, did hold correspondence, and had intercourse with Publicans and Sinners, that is, such as were proscribed the Cense of Religion; nevertheless for any person of the two first ranks so to have done, namely, to be found maintaining any kind of society or friendly conversation with such infamous persons, was held not only dishonourable and unbecoming, but flatly unlawfull. For according to a tradition yet extant in their writings, it is reckoned as one of the six scandals that those higher Orders of Religio-nists are charged by all means to avoid, namely, to dine, eat or drink with such. Now this seems to be the first occasion of quarrel against our Saviour, that he pretending to be some extraordinary person, at least a Student of the Law, did not use such branded persons with the same supercile and disdain that their great men were wont to do, but familiarly discoursed, eat and drank with them. For so we read, *Matt. 9. 10, 11. And it came to pass as Jesus sate at meat, many Publicans and Sinners came and sate down with him and his disciples, and when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with Publicans and Sinners, &c.*

*Vid. Quis
serp. in loc.*

Let it be farther noted in the third place,

3. That the Covenant which God made with this people on Mount *Sinai*, admitted of propitiation by sacrifice, and thereby gave hopes of pardon only to some smaller offences, but seemed to exclude all great and notorious transgressors, shutting them up under wrath, and appointing them to

to be cut off from amongst their people. And the minds of the Jews not being elevated above this literal dispensation, nor being able to distinguish betwixt this political transaction, and the eternal standard of justice and mercy in the divine mind, they were induced to believe, that God would exercise mercy upon no other terms than what he therein proclaimed, and that he was inexorable and implacable in all other cases beyond the tenour of that indulgence: whence it came to pass that they themselves in proportion (as they thought) to the divine proceedings, abandoned all the aforesaid kinds of notorious sinners as castaways, conceiving neither hopes of their pardon, nor usefulness of endeavouring to bring them to repentance.

And although the excellent discourses of the Prophets might have instructed them with better and more worthy notions of God, yet they superstitiously contracting those Evangelical expressions in the Prophets to the narrow sense of the Law, rather than improving the text of the Law by the divine Commentaries of the Prophets, continued still under the same mean and narrow apprehensions of divine mercy, and consequently thereof must needs pronounce very sad and dismal dooms upon all great sinners.

But forasmuch as they could not but remember the very great and foul miscarriages of some (otherwise) very holy men in the Old Testament, and particularly of *David* in his Adultery with *Bathsheba*, and the Murther of *Uriah*, for neither of which sins any sacrifice or propitiation was appointed in the Law, but the offender in such cases was to be cut off without mercy: Therefore that they might not be constrained in consequence

*Vid. Grot.
in ver. 2.*

of the aforeſaid perſuaſion, to exclude ſuch men from all hopes of pardon too, they had artifi- ces of extenuating ſuch mens ſins, (as no doubt they had of their own) and rather than forego their hide-bound notion of God, choſe againſt all ſenſe to make thoſe black crimes, meer peccadillo's, left by the example of ſuch great men (as *David*, &c.) other ſinners ſhould be encouraged to hope for mercy, beyond the tenour of their Law.

Now our Saviour preaching repentance, and giving hopes of pardon to the greateſt of ſinners, upon condition of their preſent, hearty, and thorough reformation; ſeveral poor ſouls who had been reprobated and damned by theſe ſevere Interpreters of the Law, were marvellouſly transported at ſo comfortable a doctrine, and with great affection and frequency reſort to it. Here-upon theſe demure but dogged Leguleians are offended, and inſinuate a ſuſpicion of our Saviour, that he was a friend and favourer of lewd and vicious perſons. This (I take it) is the true ſtate of the caſe, and the riſe of the excellent diſcourſes in this Chapter.

For in answer to their unjuſt imputation, our Saviour who could (if he had pleaſed) have ſhewed the ſandy foundation of all their aforeſaid Hypotheſis, by diſcovering the deſigns of the divine wiſdom in that manner of tranſaction with that people in that covenant, or by large deductions from the Propheſys have demonſtrated the uncircumſcribedneſs of the divine goodneſs, or with admirable wiſdom ſilenced them by a Philoſophick diſcourſe of the divine Philanthropy; he I ſay that could have vindicated his own doctrine and practice, and both baffled their arrogance, and ſhamed their ignorance, any of theſe or other ways, waves

all

all this, and takes a more plain and popular argument, confounding them by an appeal to the common sense of mankind, much after the manner that God silences the petulant disgusts of the Prophet *Jonah*. *Jonah* was angry with God for being more exorable towards the *Ninevites* than he expected, and would needs have had a vast and populous City destroyed, meerly to make good his own prediction. But God convinces him of his unreasonableness by a lively Emblem. There was a Gourd suddenly sprung up which refreshed the Prophet with its verdure, and covered him with its shadow. God who had caused the Gourd to grow, quickly smites it; hereupon *Jonah* is angry again, and expostulates the matter with his Maker.

Jon 4. 10, To whom the Almighty replies, *Thou hadst pity*
 11. *on a contemptible Gourd for which thou didst not labour, and which came up in a night and perished in a night, And should not I spare Nineveh that great City, (upon their repentance) wherein are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left, &c.*

In like manner our Saviour here silences the murmurings of these hard-hearted *Jews*, by three Parables: The first concerning a Lost Sheep, *vers*. 4. The second concerning a Lost Groat, *vers*. 8. And the third of a Lost Son, *vers*. 11. In all which he appeals to common experience and the sense of humanity, for evidence of the fitness of his proceedings, and the absurdity of their complaints; shewing that it is the common course of men, to express most solitude for that which is lost, and most joy upon the recovery of that which was given up as desperate. And forasmuch as the souls of men must needs be more valuable with a wise God, and
 a graci-

a gracious Creator, than those other things can be with men, he leaves it to them to infer how reasonable it is to think that the divine goodness is both highly pleased with the recovery of lost sinners, and with the means thereunto subservient. The consequence of which would be, that they must certainly see great reason to admire our Saviour's compassion, and condescension to the needs and sad condition of such men, as hugely agreeable and conducent to the ends of divine goodness, and none at all of traducing either his doctrine or carriage, as guilty of giving encouragement to looseness and extravagancy.

Thus we see the occasion which led our Saviour to make use of this Parable, and thereby we are directed to the main scope and drift of it, by advantage whereof we will in the next place make the following paraphrasitical exposition of it.

§ III. As if our Saviour had express himself more at large to this effect: "A certain man had two sons, one whereof, and he the eldest, continued always in his family, content with his provision, subject to his government, and in diligent obedience to all his commands. But the other, (*viz.*) the younger, full of juvenile heat and confidence, considers himself at the age of discretion, grows impatient of restraint, and desirous of liberty, especially fancying that he could live better to his own content, and every whit as well provide for himself, if he were at his own disposal. Therefore he desires his Father to set him out his share, and to put his portion into his own hands, and leave him to his own conduct. The Father gratifies him in all his desires, gives him his portion and his liberty."

" liberty. Which done, the Son, as if his Father's
 " presence or vicinage would put too great a re-
 " straint upon him, and give check to his freedom,
 " betakes himself to another Country, out of his
 " Father's eye, reach, and controll, and there in-
 " dulges himself the highest surfeit of licentious-
 " ness. By which means in a short time (whilest
 " he enjoying the present took no care for the
 " future) the stock his Father allotted him was
 " utterly exhausted, and with that his pleasures
 " also fail, the roots that ministered to them be-
 " ing thus dried up. And where his pleasures
 " end, his cares begin; for now he hath leisure to
 " look a little about him, and finds himself in a
 " bad case, having no course left, but either to
 " return to his Father, and confessing his folly
 " implore his compassion; or to put himself a ser-
 " vant to a stranger, thereby to get a mean liveli-
 " hood. The former of these he was yet loth to
 " come to, having not as he thought tried suffici-
 " ently the folly of his own counsels; and to take
 " to himself the shame of his own ill conduct by
 " so plain a retreat, was thought a sharper cala-
 " mity than any he yet felt: Therefore he resolves
 " upon the latter, as if the severities of a stranger
 " were more tolerable than the reproaches of a
 " Father; for he concluded a man was not per-
 " fectly miserable that had no body to upbraid his
 " folly. And now being in a strange Country, he
 " comforted himself with this, That if he should
 " find none to pity him, he was sure there would
 " be none could torture him with the grating re-
 " membrance of what he was and might have
 " been. Well, he becomes a servant, and he
 " that could not brook the grave restraint of pa-
 " ternal authority, now feels the heavy yoke of
 " servile

“servile obedience; for he is put to the base
“drudgery of feeding Swine, and hath the coarsest
“fare for his maintenance, the swine and the ser-
“vant feed alike, upon husks, only with this dif-
“ference, some body cares for the hogs, but no
“body for the slave; and the former have enough
“of that which agrees with them, but the latter
“is pinched with hunger, having not allowance
“of that sordid dyer answerable to the importu-
“nity of his needs. Being sorely afflicted with
“this, he that formerly dreamed of nothing but
“the sweets of liberty, and the surfeits of volup-
“tuousness, and never once thought of that hun-
“gry wolf, want and necessity, which now stands
“at his door, after many a sad sigh, discourages
“thus with himself, Ah fool that I was, who
“knew not when I was well, that understood not
“contentment without satisfaction, nor could
“take up with the substance, but must grasp at
“shadows till I lost both; that knew not what
“it was to be happy, but by the sad experiment
“of becoming miserable; that could not distin-
“guish between the chastisements of a Father and
“the wounds of an enemy, nor believe but all
“yokes were equal, untill I was convinc’d by tri-
“tal; that could not brook the government and
“restraints of my Father’s family, though indicat-
“ed by the reverence of my relation, and sweet-
“ened by the benignity of his countenance and
“liberal provision for all necessity and delight;
“nor be satisfied of my Father’s wisdom, but by
“the effects of my own rashness and folly. Time
“was when I had the respect and dignity of a
“a Son at home, who now find the contempt of
“a servant abroad. I was then put to no drudge-
“ry, nor had other task than to serve the honour
“and

" and interest of my Father : and in so doing I con-
 " sulted also mine own, for my duty and my
 " happiness were then united. But I am now put
 " to the basest office, to the vilest employment, as
 " if my drudgery were not so much imposed in
 " order to my Master's profit, as to my own con-
 " tumely. But that which comes nearer to me
 " yet, and pinches me very sore, is, That whereas
 " in my Father's house I could neither feel nor
 " fear want, I can now hope for nothing else :
 " There the meanest servant had bread, not only
 " to the full, but to superfluity ; much less was
 " any thing wanting to me then a Son. Now
 " the case is sadly alter'd, I that seldom had so
 " much hunger as might serve for sauce to the
 " plenty of my Father's table, feel now the diffe-
 " rence between the liberal hand of a Father, and
 " the evil and niggardly eye of a hard Master.
 " Oh the difference between the sweet fumes of
 " plenty, and the gnawing pains of wind and emp-
 " tiness ! What would I give now for what I have
 " formerly wasted or despised ! Then I loathed
 " wholesome food, and now feed upon husks. How
 " do I now envy the meanest servant in my Fa-
 " ther's house ; they have enough of all things,
 " and I the want of all things ; they surfeit and
 " I starve.
 " But alas it is to no purpose to complain here,
 " the Swine I feed cannot pity me, and the Ma-
 " ster I serve will not. There is no other choice
 " left me now, but I must return to my Father
 " or perish ; little did I think what would come
 " of it, when I forsook him, and perhaps as little
 " doth he think what I have suffered since. If my
 " sufferings have brought down my proud heart
 " and taught me submission, it may be my deplo-
 " rable

"rable condition may move his bowels. It is true
 "he cast me not out, but I forsook and abandoned
 "him; my youthfull heat and folly precipitated
 "me upon my own ruine: but as he hath more
 "wisdom than I, so perhaps the affections of a
 "Father are more strong than those of a Child;
 "and the more he sees my foolishness, the more
 "arguments will he find to shew me mercy."

"At least I will make trial of his clemency, I
 "will humbly prostrate my self before him, I'll em-
 "brace those knees that educated me, I'll lick the
 "dust of that threshold which I contemptuously
 "forsook, I'll own my fault and take shame to my
 "self, and so both magnifie his mercy if he receive
 "me, and justifie his proceedings if he reject me."

"I know my Father is subject to obnoxious to
 "no body; who shall blame him for pardoning,
 "or set limits to his mercy? nay who can tell the
 "measure of a Father's bowels? It may be too
 "there is irresistible eloquence in misery, and the
 "spectacle of a Son's adversity may have rhetorick
 "enough in it to carry the cause where a Father
 "is Judge. Or if he provoked by my folly at first,
 "and extravagancy since, will no more own me as
 "a Son; perhaps he may receive me as a servant;
 "for if my rebellion hath extinguished in him the
 "peculiar affections of a Father, yet it hath not
 "destroyed the common passions of humanity, mer-
 "cy and pity. If he will receive me in that lower
 "equality, I am now broken to the condition of a
 "servant, and shall think his yoke easie hereafter,
 "having been inured to so sharp and heavy an one;
 "I will cheerfully submit my ear to be bored to
 "his door post, and be his servant for ever."

"Oe lastly, if he will not trust a runagate, nor
 "believe that he will ever prove a constant and

" perpetual servant that hath once deserted his sta-
 " tion, let him be pleased so take me as an hired
 " servant whom he may turn off at pleasure; make
 " trial of me, and admit me only upon good be-
 " haviour. But if all fail, and he should utterly
 " cast me off, (which yet I hope he will not) I can
 " but perish, and that I do however. *misery born*
 " Well, this being resolved, he casts a longing
 " look towards his Father's house, and puts himself
 " on his way thither. But no sooner was he on
 " his way, (though yet a great way off) but his
 " Father spies him: those lean and wan cheeks,
 " and the hollow sunken eyes his extremity had
 " reduced him to, had not so disfigured him, nor
 " those rags unable to cover his nakedness so dis-
 " guised him, but his Father knew him; and the
 " memory of his former disobedience had not so
 " cancelled the interests of a Son, or shut up the
 " bowels of a Father, but that the sight of
 " his present misery kindled his compassion. And
 " whilst the son partly, through that weakness which
 " his vices and his sufferings had conspired to bring
 " upon him, and partly through a Combination
 " of shame and just fear of his Father's indigna-
 " tion, with difficulty makes toward him; the Fa-
 " ther prompted by paternal affection, and tran-
 " sported between joy and pity, runs to meet him,
 " falls on his neck and kisses him. *his beloved*
 " The Son though astonished at this condescen-
 " sion, and surprized with the unexpected benig-
 " nity of such a reception, yet could not but re-
 " member what his Father's joy made him forget;
 " namely, his former dissimulation and rebellion:
 " And therefore humbly falls on his knees again;
 " and with shame and remorse makes his contrite
 " acknowledgment after this manner. Father (for

“ so this admirable goodness of yours gives me in-
 “ couragement to call you, more than the blood
 “ and life which I derived from you, I have I
 “ confess forfeited all the interest the priviledges of
 “ my birth might have afforded me in your affecti-
 “ on having become a rebel both towards God and
 “ you; had I not first neglected him, I am sure I had
 “ never grieved you; and having forsaken you, I
 “ have not only violated the greatest obligation I
 “ had upon me, (save that to his divine Majesty)
 “ but also despised and affronted a goodness liketo
 “ his; whatsoever therefore I have suffered was but
 “ the just demerit of my folly and contumacy, and
 “ whatsoever sentence you shall pass upon me fur-
 “ ther I submit to, and here expect my doom
 “ from you: I condemn my self as no more wor-
 “ thy to be called your Son, be pleased to admit
 “ me but into the condition of your meanest ser-
 “ vant; and I have more than my miscarriages give
 “ me reason to hope for, *ad servum mundum bene*

Whilst the Son was going on at this rate, the
 Father's bowels yearned too earnestly to admit of
 the delay of long Apologies, and therefore chooseth
 rather to interrupt him in his discourse, than to
 adjourn his own joys or the others comfort: And
 because he thought words not sufficient in the case,
 he makes deeds the interpreters of his mind, com-
 manding his servants forthwith “ to bring out the
 “ best robe and to put it upon his Son, together with
 “ a ring on his hand, and shooes on his feet; i. e.
 in all points to habit him as his Son, and as the
 Son of such a Father, by all which he maketh the
 full demonstration of a perfect reconciliation: And
 not content herewith to give vent to his own joy,
 that it might not over-power him whilst he con-
 sidered in to his own bosom, and perhaps also that

those who had shared with him in his sorrows for the loss of a beloved Son, might participate also in the joy of his recovery, he goes on, "Bring out also the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my Son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found: and they began to be merry.

In the midst of this extraordinary jollity, it happens the Elder Son, who (as we said before) had always continued in his duty towards his Father, comes out of the fields where he had been negotiating his Fathers affairs, and wonders at the unusual Jubilee: And when (demanding the occasion) they of the family had made him acquainted with the whole matter, he takes it ill, and interpreting this marvellous transport of joy at his Brother's return to be in derogation from himself; as if his Father was too easie and inclinable towards him, but severe to himself, and unimindfull of the long and faithfull service he had done him, begins to expostulate the matter somewhat warily with his Father. But the good old man mildly replies, "Son I am very sensible of, and set a just value upon the long course of your obedience, and I have it both in my power and in my will to reward you: 'tis true, I have not hitherto made such solemn expressions of my love to you, as I have now done upon this occasion, for the case did not require it; you, as you have been always dutifull to me, so you have had my house, and all I have, constantly to accommodate you; as you have never rebelled against me, so you have never felt the hardships your poor Brother hath undergone by his foolishness; and as you that have never offended me never could distrust my favour, nor need such demonstrations

" of my reconciliation, which the former guilt
 " and extravagancies of your now penitent Bro-
 " ther renders necessary in his case; so also was I
 " never overwhelmed with grief for you who were
 " never lost. But forasmuch as we have beyond
 " all expectation received your Brother again;
 " whom we long since despaired of, and had gi-
 " ven up for lost, you cannot wonder, and you
 " must allow me this unusual transport; for I say
 " this your Brother was lost and is found, was
 " dead and is alive again.

Thus far the *parable* or letter of the Parable;
 wherein all things are so lively and natural, and
 the divine wisdom of our Saviour hath so accurat-
 ly described the workings of humane minds, the
 natural motions of all the passions; as that if the
 Parable became matter of history, it could not be
 otherwise acted. But now for the *evangelion* or ap-
 plication of the Parable to the matter in hand.

§. IV. In the first place it is certain, that by
 the Father of the two Sons in the mystical sense is
 meant God Almighty; *of whom the whole family of*
heaven and earth is called. But who should be the
 two Sons is not so universally agreed. Some of the
 Ancients have been of opinion, that by the Elder
 Son, was meant that higher order of intellectual
 Beings which never forfeited their Station, nor
 revolted from their Allegiance. And by the
 Younger Son, the whole race of mankind under
 Adam their head, on whom (being fallen) God
 had such compassion, as he did not shew to the Re-
 bel Angels; for which cause amongst other they
 are supposed to conceive hatred against God, and
 envy against men. But this interpretation is re-
 jected by others, and not without great cause; for

Theophy-
 last. in loc.

in this same Chapter, *vers.* 10. our Saviour tells us *the holy Angels rejoice at the conversion of a sinner*; and therefore they cannot be represented, as expostulating and murmuring at the favour extended towards such, which is said here of the Elder Brother.

S. Austin.
Q. Evang.
L. 2.

Again, others have imagined that by the two Brethren were meant the *Jews* and *Gentiles*; the *Jews* representing the Elder Brother, as having been God's ancient people; and the *Gentiles* the Younger, as who ran on in a long course of Idolatry, and estrangedness from God, till they were by the grace of God in the Gospel, admitted into the birth-right and privileges of the *Jew*, to their great regret and indignation. And indeed besides the opinion of the Ancients, it is not improbable in it self, but that our Saviour foreseeing the emulation which would afterwards happen between those two ranks of mankind, might have respect to it, and deliver himself suitably thereto in this Parable; notwithstanding that cannot be supposed to be the primary meaning, which is utterly besides the occasion of the discourse: for as *S. Jerom* well observes, the controversie was not yet risen between *Jew* and *Gentile* about privileges, the latter being not yet called nor admitted to the grace of the Gospel; but the question was only, whether great and notorious sinners (though *Jews*) should be admitted to hopes of pardon upon repentance, and the Publicans in the Text, though they were Ministers of the *Roman* Power, and reputed Instruments of the *Jewish* servitude, and therefore hated by them; yet were not *Gentiles* but a looser sort of *Jews*, as the same *S. Jerom* fully makes appear.

Therefore by the two sons here must be understood any two men, of any two sorts of men, (whether

ther *Jews* or *Pagans* it matters not) who as to piety and vertue have for a great while run a quite contrary course, but at last happen to meet at the same point of sincere goodness. Namely, by the Elder Son are described those, who from their younger years and minority, have been by the preventing grace of God, preserved from the common extravagancies and corruptions of the world; and by the blessing of God upon pious education or otherwise, have been by degrees trained up, and insensibly led on in the ways of Religion. As our Saviour elsewhere saith of the Corn, that it *grows whilst men sleep and wake*, that is, we can see it doth grow, but cannot discern the gradual progress it maketh: so such persons become sincerely good and run a race of vertue, though we cannot see where and when they set out, nor assign any date of their conversion, by reason the change was not so palpably great, nor so sudden as in the conversion of notorious sinners.

Such a person as we are now speaking of seems to have been *Obadiab*, *1 Kings* 18. 12. who sticks not to say of himself, *My servant fear the Lord from my youth*. And such another was *Timothy*, concerning whom we have the testimony of the Apostle, *2 Tim.* 1. 5. that by the carefull instructions of his Grandmother *Lois*, and his Mother *Ennice*, he had been from his youth principled with a sense of piety and religion.

To these instances I will add for the nearness of
 matter what *Pontius Diaconus* faith of *S. Cyprian*.
 He so early and presently conceived a taste of purity,
 that his propensity almost prevented all instruction.
 Nor can I forget what *S. Greg. Nazianzen* hath

left upon record touching his own Father, *He was* (saith he) *a Sheep of Christ's flock before he came in to his fold, and a Christian before he came within the Church; the probity of his temper, and singular virtues of his life, made him a Christian as it were by anticipation.* But perhaps these last expressions are somewhat too florid and rhetorical, that which I am saying is plain and easie, that there are some persons of whom the Grace of God takes early hold, and the good Spirit of God inhabiting them, not only prevents the enterprizes of the Devil, but carries them on in an even and constant course of holiness: their Christianity bearing equal date with their manhood, and reason and religion, like warp and woof running together, make up one web of a wise and vertuous life.

This is a most happy case wherever it happens, for besides that there is no more sweet nor beautiful thing in the whole world than the early buds of piety, upon which account it is probably supposed, that our Saviour (who was far from a soft fondness of youth or admiration of external beauty) gave such signal tokens of affection to *S. John*, that he was called the beloved Disciple. Besides this, I say, it is so much a more comfortable thing to escape the pollutions that are in the world through Lust, by an early engagement in a holy course, as it is more desirable to escape shipwreck, than to be saved by a plank: or to have no wound, than to experiment the most sovereign balsom: which if it work a cure, yet usually leaves a scar behind. Moreover he that begins his race betimes hath all along the comfort of his progress and proficiency, and feels himself daily approaching towards his desired end: whereas he that sets out wrong hath the hard and uncomfortable part of going quite back

back again, and undoing all he hath done, besides the agonies of conscience, and the strong convulsions which he must suffer, that casts off a long settled and habitual course of sin. To which add, that whatever diligence or zeal of God's glory a late Convert that comes into the Vineyard, as it were at the eleventh hour, may express at last, yet it is certain he hath done God a great dishonour heretofore: whereas he we now speak of, is one that coming in at the first hour, labours all day in God's work, and equally carries on the affair of God's glory and his own comfort here, and salvation hereafter. Now all these things considered, if there shall be any man so rash and injudicious, as notwithstanding to press all men without distinction in order to their title to the mercies of God and hopes of Heaven, to make the same severe reflexions upon themselves, or to shew the like sensible and discernible change in their lives, let them know by this unskillfulness of theirs, they unreasonably minister trouble to the best and happiest of men; and have a design quite contrary to that of our Saviour, who professed *he came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.* And in the seventh Verse of this Chapter he speaks of *just men which need no repentance*; that is, have no need to make a change of their whole course and begin a new, as notorious sinners ought to do. Both which places I take to be clearly interpreted, and to the sense we are assigning to them, by that other passage of our Saviour, *Jo. 13. 10. He that is washed, needeth not, save to wash his feet only*: that is, he that is already engaged in a holy course, and habituate to the ways of piety, hath only need to be daily cleansed from those occasional soils and defilements, which the infirmity of humane nature and conversation

*P. bar spe-
Hantia a-
pud Philo-
nem de
Noacho, in
lib. de A-
brahama.*

Επιμνη-
σιν αὐ-
τοῦ καὶ
τοῦ ἰα-
τροῦ αὐ-
τοῦ
καὶ τοῦ
ἀσκα-
λοῦ
τοῦ
καὶ τοῦ
καὶ τοῦ

in the world suffer no Man wholly to escape, but not to enter upon a new state, or begin a whole course of repentance. To which effect I understand those words of Origen in his Books against Celsus, Christ Jesus (saith he) was sent indeed a Physician to cure and recover sinners, but to improve and instruct those further in the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, that were already virtuous. He conclude and confirm all I have said of this kind with the sense of Manasses, which he expresses in his famous penitential prayer. *Thou, O Lord, that art the God of the just, hast not appointed repentance to the just, as to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, &c. but thou hast appointed repentance unto me who am a sinner, &c.*

This I take to be sufficient for the determination who is meant by the Elder Brother, and then we cannot be much to seek who is denoted by the Younger; for what we have now said being granted, it necessarily follows; that by the Younger Son, are described all such Persons as have run a dangerous risk of sin and impiety, that have committed gross and heinous transgressions, and continued in a state of disobedience and impenitency, after such manner as the Publicans and Sinners in the Text are supposed to have done: These are said to forsake their Father's house and presence, to mispend their portion in riotous living, who yet at last being reduced to extremity, come to themselves, turn serious penitents, bewail their folly, resolve upon amendment, implore pardon, double their diligence and care for the time to come, and of old sinners become young Saints, whereupon they are by a gracious God admitted to pardon and reconciliation, and adoption; for these the best robe is fetched out, the fatted Calf slain, and
upon

upon their conversion as a thing utterly despaired of and unexpected, there is joy in Heaven, and amongst the holy Angels. These were dead in trespasses and sins, but are now quickned and revived by the grace of God; they were Strangers and Aliens from the Covenant of Grace, but now become of the household of God, and heirs of eternal life.

And now these two points being resolved of, we have a key by which we may easily open all the circumstances of the whole Parable, so that it will not be necessary that I insist longer upon a general interpretation. Nevertheless lest there should seem one difficulty not sufficiently provided against, or any man should yet be at a loss, how if the Elder Brother denote sincerely good men, it can stand with their character to grumble at the mercifull reception of poor Penitents, as here he is represented to do. And moreover it may raise another doubt, if the Elder Brother be set to describe men of constant and unblemished Sanctity, how such a Person should be fit to depote the Scribes and Pharisees, who were certainly very evil and corrupt men. Unless a plain account can be given of these, it must follow, that either we have not hit the occasion of the Parable, or the Parable did not answer to the occasion. Wherefore to these I answer jointly, That our Saviour the more effectually to convince these Jews that reprobated and censured him, proceeds with them upon their own Hypothesis; namely, taking it for granted that they were as eminently good and holy men, as they either took themselves, or pretended to be; and that the Publicans and Sinners were indeed as bad as they esteemed them. I mean he doth not intend to signify that these censorious persons were indeed good men, for upon all occasions (we see) he upbraids

braids their rottenness and hypocrisy ; but because they out of opinion of their own sanctity and contempt of others, reproached his carriage in this matter, therefore he designs to shew them, that if that was true which is utterly false, and they as good men as they were extremely bad, yet upon due consideration they ought not to blame his management of himself, and gracious condescension to sinners. As if he had said : “ You Scribes and Pharisees wonder that instead of applying my self to your conversation, who are men of great note for sanctity and devotion, and never blemished with any great disorder ; I rather chuse to lay out my self upon the recovery of flagitious and desperate sinners : now see your own unreasonableness in this instance ; You will allow a Father to be more passionately concerned for, and express a greater joy upon the recovery of a Lost Son, than he usually doth about him that was always with him and out of danger ; and if that Son who had never departed from his Father, and so never given him occasion for those change of passions, should expostulate with his Father for his affectionateness in such a case, you would in your own thoughts blame him as envious and undutifull. Now apply this to your selves, and think as well as you can of your selves, yet upon the premises, you will see no reason to calumniate my endeavours of reclaiming sinners, or my kindness and benignity towards them upon their repentance.

By this time I doubt not but the whole drift of the Parable is made plain and perspicuous to an ordinary capacity. Wherefore now I proceed to handle the particular branches of it : of which there are these three most remarkable in the Parable,

Chap. II. *The Parable interpreted.*

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rable, and which as I have already intimated, are the designed subject of the subsequent discourse.

First, we have here a graphical description of the state and condition of an habitual sinner before repentance, from *vers. 11. to vers. 17.*

Secondly, a type or portraiture of true repentance and turning to God, from *vers. 17. to vers. 20.*

Thirdly, an Emblematical representation of God's unspeakable mercy in the gracious reception of such penitents, from *vers. 20. to the end of the Chapter, but especially to vers. 24.*

Of these three points I will treat in order according as the series of the Parable leads me. But yet because I apprehend it will be not only profitable in it self, but also peculiarly subservient to the present design, that before I apply my self to a direct prosecution of the traces of the Parable, I give a strict and Philosophical account of the Nature of Sin, and the several Stations of Sinners, as which will give both light and weight, especially to the first of the mentioned particulars, and in good measure to all the rest; This therefore I will endeavour in the next immediate Chapter.

CHAP.

C H A P. III.

Of the Nature of Sin, and of the divers States of Sinners.

The CONTENTS.

- § I. *A definition of sin : the three sorts of Laws mankind is under ; (viz.) Natural, Divine, and Humane. All sin is a violation of some or other of them. The mischief of mistake herein.*
- § II. *A Law that obliges must be known or knowable. Several ways of promulgating the Divine Laws. The guilt of sin rises in proportion to the clearness of the promulgation of that Law whereof it is a violation. The mischiefs of mistake herein, and the remedy.*
- § III. *All sin is voluntary. Cautions for the right understanding of that assertion : the proofs of the truth of it, and absurd consequences of the contrary.*
- § IV. *A passage of S. James, Chap. 1. vers. 13, &c. explained, and the nativity of sin thereby discovered.*
- § V. *The usefulness of the foregoing definition, and explication. The distinction between presumptuous sins, and sins of infirmity, and their different effects.*
- § VI. *Of reluctancy of Conscience, and whether that extenuates or increases the guilt of sin.*
- § VII. *Of the several states and mansions of sinners upon the consideration of which return is made to the Parable.*

§ L IF we take just measures of the nature of sin (at least so far as it falls under our present consideration, for it is not within the compass of my subject to treat of Original sin,) it is thus to be Defined, namely, Sin is a voluntary breach of a known Law. Or to speak more fully and distinctly, there are these three things concurrent, to make man guilty, or to denominate any action of his sinfull.

1. That by some act or omission of his, there be a going contrary to, and violation of some Law in being.

2. That the Law so violated, be such as is, or might have been known to the Offender.

3. That the Action or Omission by which such Law is violated, be consented to, and the breach voluntary.

All these three things together in conjunction are the ingredients which make up the deadly poison of sin. And for defect of due consideration of the necessary concurrence of all of them to that unhappy production, it is hard to say whether greater Errours have ensued in Doctrine, or more Vices in practice; whether more perplexities have infested mens Consciences, or more uncharitableness hath imbittered their Spirits. For if the first ingredient be left out, Sin is thereby rendred either nothing at all, or of so indefinite and uncertain a nature, as that loose and profane men will laugh at it: and on the contrary good and devout persons will never be free from suspicions of it. If the second be omitted; the consequence will be, that severe and sad judgments will be passed upon the final estate of the greatest part of mankind, and therewith very unworthy reflections be made upon the

the Divine Majesty; And if the third branch be omitted, the number of sins will be vastly multiplied, but the nature and guilt thereof so extenuated, as that men will be tempted to be more afraid of God than of sinning against him. But all this and a great deal more will better appear upon a brief explication of the particulars.

First then, wherever there is sin there is a breach of some Law in being: this though it be not the full and adequate notion, yet is the first reason of sin. And accordingly we may easily observe that in most, if not in all Languages, the very words that are made use of to express moral evil or sin, do all import the breach of some Law or rule of action. Especially the *Hebrew Tongue* (which is most significant in this kind) hath three words most usual in the case which we find all together, *Psal. 32. v. 1, 2.* and all leading us directly to this notion of sin. *Blessed is he whose Transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered: Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not Iniquity.* The first word *YWD* which we render *transgression*, properly signifying to pass set Bounds or transgress prefixed Limits. The second *NDR* which we translate *sin*, denoteth a missing of the aim or mark we were to have directed our selves towards. And the last of the three *NY* *iniquity*, implies the making of a crooked and wandering path. So that we see whatever kind, condition or degree of sin it be that is spoken of, it is still expressed by respect to some Law or Rule, in deviation from which it consists. The like may be observed in the *Greek Tongue*, in the words *avoua*, *αμαρτια*, *ηαμαρτια*, &c. and generally in other Languages.

But

But we need not insist upon niceties, when that which we are saying is the express assertion of two Apostles, S. Paul, and S. John, the former telling us, *Rom. 4. 15. Where there is no Law, there is no Transgression.* The other, *Ep. 1. Chap. 3. vers. 4. He that sinneth transgresseth also the Law: for sin is a transgression of the Law.*

Now for that Law which sin is a violation of, it is threefold, (*viz.*) Either first *the Law of Nature* and reason, that is, those differences of good and evil which the mind of man is of it self able to collect by attentive consideration of the nature of God, and our relation to him, the state of the whole Creation, and the mutual aspects of the several parts thereof upon each other, and upon our selves; (of which we shall have occasion to speak more hereafter.) Or secondly, the express and positive declarations of the Divine will concerning things to be done or avoided by us, which is commonly called *Revelation or Divine Law.* Or thirdly, the institutions, commands and prohibitions of such men as it hath pleased God to invest with Authority (under himself) of obliging others, which we call *Humane Law.*

To these some would add *Custom* as a fourth rule of action, because they observe there are many cases wherein (all the former ceasing) wise and good men are wont to govern themselves by laudable and prevailing customs; but this so far as it is obliging, may be reduced to Humane Law. Others also would add the *Law of Charity*, or of avoiding scandal as a fifth, but this is both provided for by the positive Law of God, and also deducible from natural principles. Therefore the three aforesaid measures comprize all that which can fall under the notion of Law, and consequently every such

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thing as is to be esteemed a sin must consist in a deviation from our going cross to either all or some one or other of them.

For it is evident of it self that every thing is free till something restrain and circumscribe it, and it cannot be evil but good to make use of that liberty, which derogates from no other, which infringes no Authority, being retrenched by none. And it is as evident that we owe account of our selves and carriage only to God ultimately, forasmuch as we derive our being and all we have and are from him and him only : he therefore who gave us our being and all our powers and faculties and their respective accommodations, and who continually supports us, in the exercise of them, may justly prescribe to us, and set us what boundaries shall seem fit to his infinite Wisdom.

Now there are but three ways wherein he hath imposed any obligation or restraint upon us, *viz.* Either by such footsteps of his Will, as the mind of man may trace in the order of the Creation, those intimations of good and evil which are interwoven in the very nature and order of things, and to be observed by natural reason. Or secondly, by extraordinary interposition, expressly dictating his mind and will to the Sons of men. Or lastly, delegating Authority to those whom his Providence hath constituted in Superiority, to prescribe to us in all such things as were not foreprized by the two former, *i.e.* that in all cases where neither the Laws of Nature, nor the Divine Law were infringed, there it was his will we should govern our selves by the Laws of men.

These I say are all the ways God hath thought fit, and all that are imaginable of laying any obligation upon us. Therefore wherever there is sin, either

either some plain dictate of Reason is contradicted, or some positive Law of God violated; or the Sanction of humane authority opposed; and where neither of these is done, there can be no sin upon the forecited reason of the Apostle, *where there is no law there is no transgression.*

Which plain truth we have thus carefully deduced principally for the prevention or remedy of two mistakes very rife in this matter. The former is of certain honest and well-meaning, but timorous and superstitious persons, who not content to approve themselves to the aforesaid measures, nor thinking it sufficient for their security, that neither the Law of Nature, nor any express either divine or humane Law disallow their actions, are afraid of their own shadows, and suspect sin and danger they know not why nor whence; their heart misgives them, when there is nothing in the case, but either that the thing they are about is contrary to the course of their Education; or forbidden by the imperious dictate of some person, to whose usurped authority they have prostituted their judgments. Now would such persons be induced to consider, that lawful and unlawful are relative terms; and respect some definite rule or other, which must determine any action to be this or that; that God is well pleased that his Laws be observed, and is not so severe and rigid as to oblige us negatively, that is, that we shall do nothing but what he commands; that there is a great field of liberty interjacent between express sin and express duty, and in that we may expatiate without offence; that all actions are good within that scope, and though they admit of such different degrees, as that some may be much better than others, yet none are evil that touch not upon the bounds and limits of Law:

If, I say, these things were considered, which are no more than the effect of what I said before, then would those honest minds be undeceived and enfranchised, who for want of such consideration are put to the unhappy choice, either to be despoiled of all liberty, or deprived of all peace; besides that by such jealousies they tempt both themselves and others to think hardly of God, and consequently of that, provoke all such men as are strangers to Religion to nauseate and abhor it.

The other mistake which we here seek to prevent, is of those that quite contrary to the former, are so far from thinking the three Rules of Action we laid down to be insufficient, that they persuade themselves it is no great matter for Law or Rule, as if the persuasion of a man's own conscience, an honest intention and a zeal of God were able to bear out and justify an undertaking, though against the express and literal direction of some Law in being. This conceit (strange as it is,) hath nevertheless had its Patrons and Proselytes both amongst *Jews* and *Christians*, and been the cause of mischief enough to both. Now it is true that it is within the power of Conscience, to make that which was before indifferent in the general, to become good and laudable in particular; and contrariwise by its dissent to render it evil and vicious, because God having given it a judicature, its consent is to be had in what we do; in which sense, I take it, that of the Apostle is to be understood, *whatsoever is not of faith is sin*; and for that reason an erring conscience (as I shall shew by and by) is also some mitigation of a miscarriage in practice. But it is far from the the prerogative of being able to legitimate any Action prohibited by any of the aforesaid rules, for it is but a Judge not a Law,
and

and must be governed by the measures forelaid. Or if we allow too, that the light of conscience is one of those measures, (as we do) yet must it not bear down both the other; that is, it is only a Law, and justifies an action when neither divine nor humane Laws have restrained it, and not else. Wherefore upon the whole matter it is apparent, that the three Rules aforesaid in conjunction make up the standard of good and evil; every thing is a sin that goes contrary to any of them, and nothing is so, that doth not.

§. II. 2. But Secondly, to render any action of ours culpable, it is not sufficient that some Law in being be broken, unless the Law be also promulged; *i. e.* such as is or may be known, for otherwise in effect it is no Law. And that government would justly be accounted arbitrary and tyrannical, and the Sovereign rather thought to lye at catch for the penalty than to desire just obedience, who shall impute that for a fault, which he had not given sufficient caution against by a plain declaration of his will and pleasure. For *non esse & non apparere equiparantur in Jure, that which cannot appear is in Laws all one as if it were not at all*; because an unknown Law can have no influence upon those it should concern, neither directing them what to do, nor forewarning what to avoid; neither giving notice of their duty, nor their danger; and consequently works neither upon their reason, nor their passion, and therefore not at all.

It is true that all Laws have not the same way and manner of publication, for even amongst men several Nations have their several and peculiar forms of doing it. The old Romans by Tables hung up in the Market, and places of publick con-

gress; some have done the same thing by the voice of a publick Herald, or by the sound of Trumpet, &c. but however they differed in the circumstance, they all agreed in the thing, that Laws were not perfect and obliging till they were promulged. And so it is with the Laws of God Almighty, he never expects that Men should govern themselves by the secret decrees of Heaven, nor leaves them to guess at the transactions in his Cabinet-Counsel, ~~the~~ first publishes his Law, and then requires conformity to it; though that in divers manners, as it seemed best to his divine Wisdom. Sometimes he expresseth himself by an audible voice from Heaven, wherein the Angels were employed as his Ministers, namely, when he gave his Laws upon Mount *Sinai*: other times by inspiration of Prophets and Holy Men, and making them the Interpreters of his mind to the world. When to give the more full assurance that it was he that sent and instructed them, he was wont also to send along with them some miraculous power or other, as his Credential Letters under his privy Signet. But most gloriously of all did he proclaim his mind, when he sent his Son into the world, whose every circumstance from the miracles of his Birth to the glories of his Resurrection and Ascension, sufficiently proclaimed him the *Messias*, the Messenger of the Covenant.

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this mat-
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land de
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And for the Law of Nature, these, though by some perverse Men they have been denied to have the Nature of Laws obligatory, because they have not had the like solemnity of publication, as others have had, yet * forasmuch as these have either been written upon the fleshy Tables of men's hearts, where all that will look inward may read them, or rather, (as I have intimated already) are ingraven

ingraven and inserted into the very nature of things, and texture of the Universe, where who-soever hath not unmanned himself, and debauched his reason, may be able to discover them. And besides they have manifestly the sanction of rewards and punishments, in the constant experience of good and evil, attending the observation and contempt of them respectively, upon which accounts they must needs seem to all honest and unprejudiced minds, sufficiently promulged.

So that constantly some way or other according as it seemed best to him, God hath always been pleased to make his mind sufficiently and certainly known to all those upon whom he intended it should have the force and obligation of a Law, and he never required obedience otherwise than in proportion to such manifestation. Accordingly we observe, that when he had given Laws to the People of the *Jews*, and proclaimed them very gloriously and solemnly as aforesaid; yet in regard such proclamation could not certainly reach to all other Nations, (for that as well as for other reasons,) he did not exact of any other people conformity to those institutions, nor judged them thereby. So the Apostle assures us, Rom. 2. 12. *Such as have sinned without the Law, shall perish without the Law; and as many as have sinned under the Law, shall be judged by the Law.*

And it is further very remarkable, that even the Gospel it self, which was (what the Religion of the *Jews* was not, namely) an Institution fitted for all Countries, Nations, and Ages; and which therefore our Lord *Christ* took care by his Apostles as his Heralds to proclaim all the World over: This Gospel I say, till it was fully published, and until Men had time given them to consider well of

it, and to overcome their prejudices against it, made a favourable interpretation of Men's unbelief. This I take to be the import of those words of our Saviour, *Joh. 9. 39, 41. For judgment am I come into the world, that they that see not might see; and that they that see, might be made blind. If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, we see, therefore your sin remaineth.* And to the same purpose, *John 15. 22. If I had not come, and spoken amongst them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.* And of the truth of this, *St. Paul* himself was a great instance, for so he tells us, *1 Tim. 1. 13. I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. q. d. I lay under mighty prejudices by reason of my Education in the stiff way of a Pharisee; and it required a great sincerity to be willing to listen to new proposals, a huge sagacity to be able to see through those mists that were cast before my eyes, and a most generous resolution to break through these and all other difficulties; in consideration whereof, God was pleased to make abatements of the guilt of my unbelief in proportion to the temptations I had thereto. It is indeed both a well known, and as well received a Maxime, Ignorantia Juris non excusat, that it is no excuse of a fault to say non putâram, I did not know the Law; because when a Law is once promulged, every Man is bound to take notice of it, and it can be imputed to nothing else but supine and affected ignorance, if he shall then continue ignorant. Notwithstanding upon the self-same supposition it seems to be granted, that where the case is otherwise, that is, where the Law not being sufficiently published, cannot be known, by an honest diligence, there ignorance is no fault, because indeed (as I said) there the Law is no Law.*

Those

Those who consider not this point, must needs be tempted to pass very dismal and damnable Sentences against the greatest part of Mankind, and consequently cannot avoid very hard thoughts of God : for the prevention of both which great evils, as also to confirm what hath been now said, there is nothing more usefull than to study well the Parable of our Saviour concerning the Talents, *Matt. 25. 14.* by the due consideration whereof, we shall amongst other instructions be led into the apprehension, that God proceeds not with men Arithmetically, but Geometrically, or that the vertue or vice which God rewards or punishes consists not in *puncto*, but is estimated according to Men's diligence or neglect of improving those means and advantages which have been afforded them. For as there is the same proportion between 1. and 2. as between 5. and 10. so he that having but half (suppose) of the advantages which another Man enjoyed, proves to be as good as that other, is really much better. Whereas he that having double the advantages, is not better than he whom he this way so much excels, is not good at all, nor will be acceptable to God when he shall be weighed in the balance of the Sanctuary. Because whosoever had been furnished with true internal probity of mind, and was of an obedient temper, and had a sincere love of goodness, would most certainly have advanced in the measures of vertue proportionably to the opportunities he had of so doing ; *i.e.* in the words of our Saviour, *He that was faithfull in little, would have been so in much.* And on the contrary, he that under great advantages hath not been proportionable in the improvements of his temper and life, it may truly be said of such a Man, God hath been very good

good to him, but he for his part is not good at all. Which consideration will be of use, both to make us more wary in pronouncing concerning the final estate of other Men, and also enable us to pass a better judgment of our actions and state; forasmuch as it hereby appears, that it is not the bare conformity or inconformity of our actions to a Law or Rule from whence their value or their guilt arises, but respect is had to the knowledge or knowableness of that Rule. And so we have the second ingredient of sin.

§. III. 3. Lastly, to render sin compleat and perfectly criminal, it is neither enough that for the matter of it, it be against some Law, nor that such Law be known, but the act or omission must be voluntary; that is, not what a man was overborn into by some fatal necessity, or compelled to by the force of some violent impression, not what he could neither help nor hinder; but what was so far subject to his own free choice, that he willingly did what he did, and could have done otherwise, or omitted doing if he had been so pleased. For whatsoever is not of this nature is not properly an humane act, and therefore cannot involve him in the guilt of sin, no more than the effects and productions of natural causes can be esteemed vicious. And though men have understanding which those other causes are destitute of, yet that being only the *Criterion* or Test of truth and falsehood, not of moral good and evil, therefore virtue and vice are not imputable to the understanding but to the will, which being the Helm of the soul determines all its motions, and accordingly is accountable for them. For the more clear understanding of which, and of whatsoever I may have occasion to say hereafter touching this matter, I think

I think it useful to precaution these three things.

1. That it is not to be doubted, but that notwithstanding the liberty which the will of man hath to chuse evil, yet it is not so uncontrollable in its elections, but that it is subject to the power of God's grace to be checked and controlled by by him at his pleasure; for the divine wisdom may well be supposed to have a thousand ways of diverting man from his course without offering any direct violence to his faculties, some of which might easily be instanced if it were needfull; nay there is no reason to question, but divine omnipotence may (if it so please) irresistibly incline, move, and determine it to that which is good, of which some instances also may be assigned, though these last must be expected to be very rare, partly because that ordinarily to invert the nature of things, and put his creation out of course, makes not so much for his wisdom as it may seem to do for the demonstration of his power, and partly also because thus taking away the natural and evident reason of rewards and punishments, would obscure that justice which he designs to glorifie. But this is all that is asserted at present, that whatsoever God may please to do either for the hindering of evil, or the effecting of good, he doth not necessarily determine or over-rule the wills of men to that which is evil, but therein they are left to themselves.

*V. Hales de
homine,
cap. 1. p. 39.*

*V. S. Theo-
doret. *cap. 1.*
*quodam ar-
gumto,*
*Serm. 5.**

2. As some excellently good men may arrive at such a perfection, such a new nature, and such habits of goodness, as that it shall be morally impossible they should chuse evil; (of which I shall treat more at large hereafter) so on the other side, it is neither impossible nor unusual for evil men to forfeit the freedom of their wills, so far as to bring not only a bias upon their spirits, but a kind of fatal

fatal propension to evil, and render it in a manner necessary that they sin. Namely, by long custom and inveterate habits of sin, they lose the *equilibrium* and balance of their souls, and thenceforth wholly incline to evil. But forasmuch as this (wherever it comes to pass) is only the effect of their own choice, it contradicts not what we are asserting; for whereas the habits were voluntarily contracted, the effects are interpretably so too. And therefore as we noted before under the former Head, that the reason why ignorance of the Law did not excuse a default, was because the Law being once sufficiently promulged, such ignorance must needs be supine and affected, that is, voluntary; for the same reason such men as we now speak of, cannot excuse their miscarriages, by laying the blame upon their present necessity or impotency; because having first crippled themselves voluntarily, their actual halting afterwards is so too, in as much as it was free in its causes, though not in the special instances.

*W. S. Ba-
fil. Homil.
31. cap. 7.
de peccatis.
in initio.*

3. But that which is principally to be considered, is, that there is a vast difference betwixt the power or capacity of doing good, or of avoiding evil; or willing so to do on the one side, and of doing or willing that which is evil on the other. For to the former of these there is a necessity of the concurrence of divine grace and assistance, which no man can deny without falling in with the Pelagians; and therefore when a man is said to have it in his power to do good, that which is true is no more but this, that such grace and assistance

*He that
will con-
sult Grat.
in Matt. 19.*

17. will find an heap of testimonies of Fathers and Philosophers to this purpose, collected to his hand.

To which if he please, he may add *Isidor. Pelusiot. lib. 4. Ep. 171.*

which

which is necessary, is always ready and at hand ; which joyntly concludes for God's goodness and man's liberty, making the actions of man punishable when he doth evil, because grace was ready to have assisted him otherwise if he had not refused it; and rewardable when he doth well, because when he might have refused God's help he did not; and in short gives God the glory of whatever is good, because it could not be done without him; and leaves no man without encouragement of his diligence and industry, because God will not be wanting to him. But for the latter, namely, the doing or willing that which is evil, there is nothing more requisite, but the will it self (provided God extraordinary interpose not to hinder it.)

This Do-
ctrine was
followed
and im-
braced by
the first re-
formers
of this
Church of
England as
appears by

the Book entituled, *The Erudition of a Christian Man*, particularly in the exposition of the Lord's Prayer; for which, *vid. Burnet's Hist. of Refor. pars. 1. lib. 3. p. 291.*

These things premised, I am not aware of the least suspicion that can lie against what we are asserting; namely, that a necessary and principal ingredient of sin, is the voluntariness thereof; and of the truth hereof, the proofs are as many and pregnant; as the absurdities of the contrary are manifest. For what ground can there be imaginable, why God should use exhortations and perswasions, reproofs and expostulations with men for sin, if it were not in their power to withstand it? wherefore should he upbraid them for their wilfulness, condemn them for stubbornness, and after all severely punish them for what they could not help? If the insupportable weight of necessity lies upon them, or some latent and irresistible cause overpower them, they are patients rather than agents, and deserve pity rather than blame or punishment.

*Nec peccatum nec re-
de factum
imputari
cuiquam
juste potest
qui nil se-
cerit pro-
pria volun-
tate. Est i-
gitur &
peccatum
& reus fa-
ctum in li-
bero volun-
tatis arbi-
trio. S. Au-
gustin
Resp. ad
83. Q.*

It

Ὁ βιάζο-
μενος
δὲν ἥσυχον
ἐκείνῳ
δὲν ἀπὸ
δὲν βιά-
ζεται.
Porphyr.
de abst. lib.
I.

Magnum
humana
imbecilli-
tatis patro-
cinium ne-
cessitas, que
quicquid
cogit, excu-
sat. Sen.
Mentem
peccare non
corpus: &
unde consi-
lium abfu-
erit pecca-
tum abesse.

It was a discreet saying of Porphyry, *A man that is moved by force only, is properly enough said to be where he was, as if he had not been moved at all.* For whatsoever seeming alteration necessity and violence may make for the present, when once the force is over, every thing returns to its own nature again, and is what it was before; but without doubt in all moral consideration, Man is reasonably to be interpreted to be in that state all the while, where he was by his own choice, and would have continued had not force expelled him. And Seneca said very well, *Necessity is the great Sanctuary of humane infirmity; which whosoever can lay claim to, obtains protection, for it perfectly excuses all the faults it commits.* Whatever can justly be pretended to be necessary, if it be evil, is a natural one and not a moral, and an unhappiness or punishment rather than a sin. So the Romans judged also in a well known case, *It is the free mind which only is capable of guilt, dull matter and body, whatsoever is passive, cannot be blamed, because they cannot chuse.* Neither is it possible any Man should repent of doing what he could not but do, or of omitting to do what was never in his power to effect; no more than that he cannot fly like a Bird, or move like an Angel. What remorse, or shame, or trouble of conscience can there be, that a Man is not another kind of creature than he was made, that he did what was natural and necessary for him to do, or for such things as may indeed be said to be done by him, and yet not be his act, that is, the act of a Man, because he could not do otherwise? God hath set up Conscience as his Vicegerent, and a Judge within us; but as we said before, it is not so absolute as to judge without a Law, so neither can it be so unjust and absurd, as to condemn and torture

torture without conviction of guilt. And though there is no doubt of the prerogative of God to impose what Laws he pleases; yet we have the manifold security of his goodness, wisdom and justice, besides his truth and faithfulness, that he will not oppress us with his sovereignty, but in all his dispensations will consider our frame and circumstances, and remember that we are *but dust and ashes*.

In short, if there be any so absurd, as to affirm sin to be any way necessary, to all other absurdities, 1. They bring in the surly paradox of the *Stoicks*, and make all sins equal, representing the most pitiable infirmities of humane nature, equal to the most dissolute enormities: 2. They infinitely increase the number of sins, but take off the weight and guilt, render it little more than a notion, and teach Men to have no horrid apprehensions of it: 3. They excuse Man, and lay the fault (if there be any) somewhere else: but wherever that is, it will revolve at last upon God blessed for ever.

6. IV. But I perswade my self I need not proceed further in exaggerating this matter; wherefore both to close and to confirm what I have said, I will only subjoin the Authority of the Apostle *S. James*, in that remarkable passage of his Epistle, *Chap. 1. vers. 13, 14, 15*, wherein he describes the conception, formation, growth, perfection and nativity of sin. The words are these; *Let not any man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God is not tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth Death.* Upon which, let

let me crave leave to use the liberty of this less strict Paraphrase. As if he had said, " Let no
 " man imagine, that God by any act of his pro-
 " vidence, provokes or prompts, or much less puts
 " any necessity upon Men to sin ; for as he by the
 " perfection of his divine nature is infinitely above
 " the reach of any temptation to act it himself,
 " so it is so contrary to him that he abhors it
 " wherever it is, and therefore can by no means
 " contribute to it, nor have any hand in the pro-
 " duction of it. And though several of his designs
 " suppose it, and his providence be exercised about
 " the regulation of it ; yet this is no argument
 " that he either ordained it, or effects it. For his
 " wisdom is sufficient to enable him to see through
 " all the Series of causes, and to foreknow what
 " they are pregnant with, and what they will in
 " their respective times be delivered of, without
 " peremptory determination of them thereunto.
 " And again, although it be true, that sin could
 " not have been in the world unless he had
 " thought fit to permit it, yet it is never
 " the more by him, since it takes its rise from
 " nothing else, but the unhappy use of that
 " great blessing and privilege of liberty which
 " he endowed rational creatures withal. Would
 " you then understand more particularly the
 " generation of this *sponte nascent* ? take it thus.

" First then you are to know, that the
 " great and wise Creatour of all things for
 " weighty reasons thought fit to create Mankind
 " of a middle nature and condition, betwixt pure-
 " ly spiritual beings, and the inferiour world of
 " meer animal and natural, making him participate
 " of both; and agreeably hereunto, endowed him
 " both with intellectual and sensitive powers.

The

" The former whereof, namely the intellectual,
 " were to enable him to serve his Creator, to ren-
 " der him capable of noble and excellent delights,
 " and that he might by them order and govern
 " the inferiour and sensitive faculties. And these
 " latter were given him, partly to relax his mind
 " by a moderate and seasonable condescension to
 " the sweetness of the senses, but principally to
 " be a field and exercise for those active, vigorous
 " and noble capacities of the mind.

" Again, Secondly, you are to consider, that
 " as that wise and benign Majesty never made any
 " thing but what was good in its kind, and hap-
 " py according to its proportion; so especially in
 " this part of his workmanship, he prepared and
 " apportioned objects suitable to the aforesaid dif-
 " ferent capacities, and allowed the use and exer-
 " cise of both, only with this remarkable diffe-
 " rence, that the objects and entertainments of sense
 " were little and narrow, but present at hand;
 " those of the intellectual powers grate, but out
 " of view and at distance: by which means it
 " became somewhat difficult, but not impossible,
 " for those higher faculties to maintain that au-
 " thority over the inferiour which he designed
 " them for, and expected from them.

" 3. Then further to afford those higher powers
 " opportunity to shew themselves, he retrenches
 " in some measure the liberty of the sensitive fa-
 " culties, forbidding some kinds of enjoyments
 " of their proper objects; in which case those
 " strong, but unjudging faculties, being restrained
 " in those things which were natural to them,
 " and wherein they found a quick relish and de-
 " light, have (as it cannot be expected but they
 " should) a proneness and inclination to such
 " things,

Difficile,
 quin potius
 impossibile,
 perturbati-
 onum initi-
 is cavere
 quempi-
 am, quas
 significan-
 tibus Græci
 ἀνεπιτηδεύειν

things, notwithstanding the divine prohibition. This is that which the Apostle calls *Concupiscentia*; and which I think the Schoolmen mean by *motus primo primi*; and although sin takes its rise hence, yet hitherto there is no sin; for did the higher faculties now quit themselves as they might and ought, and in consideration of the reverence due to the divine Majesty, and those boundaries he hath set, give check to these inclinations, all were well.

ἀνεπιτηδεύειν vocant. S. Hieron. Ep. ad Demetr.

“ But now begins the mischief; For whilst those objects of sense continually present themselves to, and court their proper powers, and reason, not stepping in to disturb and forbid the partly, that proneness or connaturalness (of which we spake) quickly starts up into the desire of such things as God hath forbidden, in which consists the first conception of sin: and hitherto the higher faculties are guilty as accessories only, because they did not interpose to hinder these beginnings. But then in the next place, phancy and imagination being employed about the object so desired, do in that manner paint and set it out, or by a kind of Chymistry so wonderfully sublime and heighten it, that the value is mightily raised, the desire inflamed, and in despite of all danger must not be denied. Thus the *Embryo* is cherished in the womb of the soul and gathers strength. And now it was high time for the higher powers to correct their first error, to rally their forces, to call in all the aids of Religion, and set in vigorously, and stop the further progress of the mischief. But reason either laid asleep by the fumes of sense forgets the danger,

“ danger, and lets fall its scepter; or those higher
 “ powers, either prevented in their preparations,
 “ or corrupted by the charms of pleasure, con-
 “ nive at the disorder, and making but a faint and
 “ superficial resistance, the second error becomes
 “ worse than the first, and sin goes on and grows
 “ ripe for the birth: till at last passion still swel-
 “ ling, and reason yielding, consents as it were to
 “ its own deposition, and lust getting the consent
 “ of the will, hath the reins put into its hands,
 “ and so all the members of the body are subject
 “ to its command, and then is sin brought forth
 “ perfect and consummate.

§ 5. Thus I have as briefly and plainly as I
 could, opened the nature of sin; by the tenour of
 which discourse we may gain this double advan-
 tage; first, to understand what it is which fills sin
 with that malignity, as to make it the just hate of
 God and man; and secondly, to be able to distin-
 guish the several degrees of guilt, or principal ag-
 gravations of sin. For touching the former of
 these, we may easily perceive by what has been
 said, that guilt is not a meer arbitrary stamp that
 God sets upon actions, nor punishment an effect
 of harshness or severity, forasmuch as all that
 which God puts under that character, and punishes
 as such, is in the first place a contradiction to the
 divine will, and to that law and order of things he
 hath constituted in the world; and secondly, is a
 contempt also of the divine wisdom, in that the
 sinner either turns his back upon the proclaimed
 Laws of Heaven by affected ignorance, or takes
 himself to be lawless, and confronts God Almight-
 y; and lastly, there is wilfulness and contumacy in
 it too; for whereas it pleased God out of special
 favour,

favour, to endow men with freedom, to the intent they might serve him both more honourably and more chearfully, they in sinning perversly turn this privilege against their Maker.

And for the second of these, though sin admits of many heads of abatement or aggravation; as namely, either from the matter of it, or the Law it violates, whether natural, divine or humane; or from the clearness or dimness of the light,

*In omni injustitia
permultum interest, utrum
perturbatione aliqua
animi, quae plerumque
brevis est, & ad tempus;
an consilio & cogitatione
fiat injuria.* Cic. Offic. lib. 1.

*Huc referque insignia
habentur apud S. Theodoret. Orat. 1. 1.
de virtute activa, circa
finem.*

under which men sin, the greatness or littleness of the temptation which they have to offend, and several other considerations of that kind which it is not uneasie to specify: yet the most general and the most usefull distinction is taken from that which I reckoned, as the third and last ingredient of sin; namely, from the consent of the will in the commission of it; for so if we observe we shall find, that both in the esteem of Scripture and Conscience, the degrees of guilt are principally reckoned in proportion to the imperfectness or fulness of its consent or concurrence to any vicious action. Insomuch that herein that great distinction of sin into infirmity and presumption hath its foundation; namely, when there is but an imperfect compliance of the will, the miscarriage is of the former kind; but when it fully yields and consents, it is a sin with a high hand. Which being a matter wherein the peace of men's Consciences here, and their eternal welfare hereafter is concerned, I shall not suspect it will be unacceptable to the Reader, that I speak a little more fully to it.

And first, to reckon up the most common instances of sins of infirmity, I take them to be properly

perly such as these following. (*viz.*) The first be- *Inquirenti*
ginnings of sin not pursued, when a man unadvi- *mibi in me*
edly enters the confines of evil, but recovers and *quedam*
withdraws himself as soon as he considers the con- *vitia ap-*
sequents, and apprehends the mischief and dan- *parent re-*
ger. Or when by the nearness of the allurements *secta & in*
of sense, and the quick motion of bodily passions, *aperto posi-*
he begins to take fire; or when the extraordinari- *ta, que*
ness of the temptation surprized him, or the migh- *manu pren-*
ty prevalence of example overbore him beyond his *derem,*
course and intention, before he well understood *quodam*
where he was; and he had no time to recollect *obscuriora*
himself, and to call in the aids of Reason and Re- *& in recess-*
ligion. Perhaps a mighty fear may hurry a man *su, que-*
to some degree of indecency, or an huge advan- *dum non*
tage may sway him a little aside, till he can so *continua,*
far recover himself, as maturely to consider; and *sed ex in-*
then to set himself upright, he bends himself quite *tervallis*
the other way. Now in all these cases, where there *veduntia:*
was no room for deliberation, there could be no *que vel*
perfect judgment; and consequently but an imper- *volentissi-*
fect consent. *ma dixe-*
rim, ut bo-
stes vagos,
& ex occa-
sione affli-
ctos, per
quos neu-

trum licet, nec tanquam in bello paratum esse, nec tanquam in pace secu-
rum, &c. apud Senec. de tranquill. animi cap. r.

Again, whilst a man is bending himself with
all his might against some one extreme which he
knows to be evil, and therefore carefully declines;
he may perhaps in detestation of that, incline too
much to the other; or whilst a man endeavours
diligently to carry on both the affairs of this life,
and the concerns of Religion too; it may happen
that the solicitude and cares of the former, may
sometimes unseasonably crowd in, and disturb him

*Affectus sunt motus
animi improbabilis, su-
biti & concitati, qui
frequenter negligesse
morbum. Sicut di-
stillatio una, nec adhuc
in morem adducta, sus-
sim facit, assidua &
vetus Phthisis. Senec.
ep. 75.*

in the latter. Nay once more, through the infirmity of memory, compared with the multiplicity of affairs, which a wise and good man's care extends to, it may not infrequently fall out, that such a person for the present forgets, or omits some duty of Religion. Now it cannot be said that any of these cases are perfectly involuntary, because it was not impossible, but that extraordinary diligence and watchfulness might have provided against them, nevertheless they are not deliberate sins, nor was there any full consent of the will to them; as is evident both by what we have said already, and also by this, that such persons we speak of very quickly feel remorse for them, their hearts finite them upon the first reflection upon what hath past, and they presently recover themselves, and double their watch and guard, where they have thus found themselves overtaken. These therefore and all other of the nature of these, are properly called sins of infirmity.

But now on the other side, when the matter of fact is notorious and palpable, that it can admit of no dispute, whether it be evil or no; when a Man is not surprized, but makes his election; doth not insensibly slip awry whilst he was in his right way, but takes a wrong course; is not overborn by an huge fear, but is allured by the pleasures of sense; when he hath time to consider, and yet resolves upon that which is forbidden him; here is little or nothing to extenuate the fact, or mitigate his guilt; it is a voluntary, and therefore a presumptuous sin. Such a distinction as this *David* seems to make, *Psal. 19. 12, 13.* when he prays that

that he *may understand his errors*, to the intent that with holy Job, where he had done iniquity, he might do so no more, but earnestly begs that he may be kept from presumptuous sins; i. e. from such voluntary and wilfull miscarriages as we have but now spoken of: so, saith he, *shall I be innocent and free from the great transgression*. For though sins of infirmity in the most proper sense are not without guilt, at least if God should proceed in rigour with Men, yet in consideration of the goodness of God, together with the evident pitiableness of their own circumstances, they leave no horror upon the mind, no stain or ill mark upon the person, much less a scar or a maim; but the other, besides their great guilt, either terribly afflict, or lay wast and stupify the Conscience; they harden the heart, break the powers of the soul, and quench the Spirit of God; as we shall have occasion to speak more at large hereafter.

At present I think it may be very pertinent to observe, that whereas S. John, Ep. 1. Chap. 3. verse 4. seems to give a brief and compendious description of sin in these words, *Ἡ ἀνομία ἐστὶν ἡ παραβίασις τοῦ νόμου*, which we render, *Sin is a transgression of the Law*; it is not altogether improbable, but that the Apostle intended to express something more than is commonly understood by those words in English; for besides that it seems a flat saying, *he that sinneth transgresseth the Law, for Sin is a transgression of the Law*; it is noted moreover by Learned men, that the Apostle calls not sin, *μετὰ νόμου*, which had been the most proper word to denote a meer breach or transgression of the Law, but uses the word *ἀνομία*, which signifies a great deal more; namely, lawlessness and dissoluteness, the living without, or casting off the yoke of the Law; for so we find it

Aggravations and Abatements of Sin. Part I.

elsewhere used in Scripture, particularly, 1 Tim. 1. 9. where we have ἀνόμοι καὶ ἀνυπότακτοι, *lawless and disobedient*, or ungovernable joyned together. And thus the phrase of the Apostle before us will import, not so much the meer matter of sin, (*viz.*) the violation of a Law, but the aggravation of it as a presumptuous sin; namely, the wilfulness and stubbornness of the sinner. And if this gloss may be allowed, we shall with much ease be able to understand a following passage in this Apostle which hath not a little exercised the heads of Divines, nor less perplexed the Consciences of many serious persons. (*Viz.*) vers. 9. of this Chapter he writes thus, *He that is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* Now if we take sin strictly and rigorously here, for every thing that is contrary to the perfection of the Divine Law, then it will be absolutely necessary, that by the phrase, *He that is born of God*, we can understand none but our Saviour himself; (which is altogether besides the business) so far as he only was without sin in that sense: but if we take the phrase in the latitude before intimated; that is, for voluntary, wilful, and deliberate sins; then the sense is both easie and comfortable; namely, that the Man who is truly a Christian, having not only the profession, but the new nature, temper and spirit of the Gospel; though being a Man, and so incompassed with temptations and difficulties, as every one is in this world, he cannot avoid all surreptions; yet the powerfull principles of Christianity settled in his heart will not fail to preserve him (at least ordinarily) from rebellion and wilful disobedience.

And this way of interpreting these and the like passages of the New Testament, is strongly countenanced

nanced by what we find, *Luke 1. 16.* where it is said of *Zachary* and *Elizabeth*, that they were both of them righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. That is, they were sincerely good and vertuous persons, their hearts were principled with the fear and love of God; and though they were not without the errors and failings incident to humanity, yet they strictly made Conscience of their duty, and did not deliberately depart from the way of God's commandments. And that passage concerning *David*, *1 King. 15. 5.* seems sufficient to put the matter out of doubt, where it is said, *David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.* Notwithstanding the Scripture reckons up several failings of *David*; his passion for *Absalom*, his numbring the People, his approaching too near the Lord's Anointed when he cut off the skirt of *Paul's* Garment, (for which his heart smote him) his despondency of mind and mistrusts that he should one day fall by the hand of *Saul*, his rage against *Nabal*, &c. But in regard these were but imperfectly voluntary, therefore they make no blot in his Character. But in the matter of *Uriah* the fact was horrible, there was time for deliberation, the use of cunning and contrivance, and therefore full consent. Wherefore this was quite of another consideration from all the rest, and left such a stain upon him, as required many tears and prayers, and a very serious and signal repentance to cleanse him from.

§. VI. Thus much I had thought sufficient for the clearing the distinction between sins of infirmity

mity and presumption; but I cannot but take notice of a mistake equally common and dangerous, which where-ever it takes place, doth not only render all we have hitherto said useles, but is of fatal consequence to the souls of Men. It is to this effect: When Men are about the commission of some great and enormous sin, it is not unusual for them to find some reluctancy and abhorrence within themselves. Now for the sake of this they think, that although they yield to the temptation, and commit the sin; yet it will not be esteemed altogether a voluntary transgression, but will admit of great abatements, by reason of such combat and conflict which they found in themselves. And to this purpose they apply that passage of the Apostle, Rom. 7. 15. *That which I do I allow not, for what I would that do I not, but what I would not that I do.* And that which follows also, *vers. 17. So then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.* But to remove so dangerous a mistake, it would be well considered in the first place, that however some have learned to call such a reluctancy as aforesaid, by the specious name of the combat between the flesh and spirit, or the regenerate and unregenerate part, as the same Men love to speak; it is certainly nothing else, but meerly some remains of natural Conscience in men, and is to be found in some measure in the very worst of men; that is, in all but those whose Consciences are seared, and utterly insensible. It is the very nature of Conscience it self, which is nothing else but a kind of internal sense of good and evil implanted by God in the nature of man; and a Man may more easily destroy any of his outward senses, than quite extinguish this. The Apostle takes notice of it in the *Romans, Chap. 2. vers. 15.* whose vi-

ces were yet so notorious, as that they were utterly out of capacity of being accounted regenerate men. Indeed, if a Man found in himself so quick a sense of his duty, and were so tender of all degrees of evil, that his Conscience not only checkt, but called him off, and restrained him upon the first appearance or approaches of sin; this (as I have intimated before) would be a good sign of regeneration; and such beginnings of evil so resisted, will not be imputed as wilfull transgressions.

But when a man's Conscience only checks him, but he goes on and commits the sin, the best that can be made of it, is only that it is not a sear'd Conscience; and yet such a Man is in a fair way to that also; for as a part of the body by being often rubbed and hurt, grows at last callous and insensible, so the Conscience being often resisted in its intimations, and stifled and over-born by the fury of lust and passion, grows at last stupid and dead. So the Apostle tells us, *Rom. 1. 28.* because they liked not to retain God in their minds he gave them up to vain imaginations, and because they gave themselves to sensuality, he gave them up to unnatural lusts; and so by degrees *ἐκ δεικνύοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς ἀνέμουν νουν, to a reprobate mind*; to a state of stupidity, a spirit of injudiciousness to lose the feeling of good and evil. And in the mean time it is so far from extenuating the guilt of a man's sin, that his heart smote him for it; that on the contrary, it is a great aggravation of his presumption, that he went on to the commission of it notwithstanding. If a Man could say he did not so well know his duty as he should, and therefore his Conscience not being rightly informed, did not give him warning of it; or that he was in a hurry, and could

not

Τὸ μὲν ἀ-
κρίστον
αἰφνίδιον.
Clem. A-
lex. p. dag.
l. 1. c. 2.

Θνητῶ δὲ
μὲν καὶ ἀ-
λογον καὶ
οὐκ ἐν εὐ-
δία τὸ
ἐλπίον,
καὶ τὸ
χαίροντος,
καὶ ἀκρα-
σίας καὶ
μαλακίας
καὶ ἁδαι.

not consider ; or confesses that his rashness and pre-
cipitancy ; these are some mitigations, for (as S. Cle-
mens well pronounces,) *That which is involunta-
ry is sudden* ; and where a Man cannot deliberate, he
scarcely consents. But when the case is such, that
a Man must acknowledge he knew what he did, he
thought of it and condemned it, and yet did it ;
this surely is an aggravation, if any thing in the
world be so. *It is* (saith a generous Heathen, *Plu-
tarch* by name,) *a most unmanly and brutish thing
for a Man that knows what he should do, softly and
effeminately to give himself up to the swing of intem-
perate passions.* In short, if when a Man (confes-
sing the truth) must say, he had reason against
what he did, but confronted it ; his Conscience
shamed him, but he resolved to be shameless ; he had
weapons in his hand to resist temptation, but he
cast them down and yielded : (all which is implied,
when a Man saith his Conscience smote him when
he went about a sin, but nevertheless he persisted and
committed it ;) I say, if this be not a voluntary sin,
there is no such thing incident to mankind : For it is
plain that here is no averfation of the will towards
the sin, nor so much as an imperfect concurrence of
it ; for the choice of the soul runs clear and full for
the commission, only it happens that the Judgment
and Conscience put some rubs in its way, that make
it go more uneasily, but it goes notwithstanding.

§. VII. Thus much concerning the guilt or ma-
lignity of sin in the general : Now briefly for the
various states and mansions of sinners : Which we
shall the more easily understand, if we first consi-
der the several degrees of virtue ; or so many high-
er and lower capacities as there are of being good
and holy. And I know not where to find these
more

more exactly reckoned up and described, than by S. Clement of Alexandria, who makes four stations of perfection. 1. Not to sin at all, Which, (saith he) is the felicity of the divine Nature, and to be sure not the condition of any meer man in this world. 2. Not to commit any wilfull or voluntary sin, which is the attainment of the perfect man, or true Gnostic, as he uses to speak. 3. Rarely to be guilty of inadvertency, or involuntary Lapses; which is the condition of a good proficient in religion. 4. And Lastly, When a man hath sinned, to recover himself early by repentance, and not lye under the guilt, nor much less grow into a habit of sin. Which lowest degree, though it be vastly different from every of the former; yet it is tolerable, and acceptable, through the mercy of God, as we shall see anon.

Τὸ μὲν ἑκκαίδεκα ἐστὶν ἀκρίτων περὶ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν, ὅπως ἴδωμεν παλαιῶν γράμματα. Τὸ μὲν ἑκκαίδεκα ἐστὶν ἀκρίτων περὶ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν, ὅπως ἴδωμεν παλαιῶν γράμματα. Clem. Alex. pedag. lib. 1. To this purpose Seneca also discourses very excellently in his 75. Epistle, where he makes three stages or stations of Virtue.

Now in some proportion to this discourse, we will suppose four stations or degrees of wickedness: 1. Such as do nothing but sin, which we only mention for method sake, for as we are certain non datur summum malum, or that there is no being absolutely evil, (as the Manichees imagined) so it is very unquestionable whether the very Devil himself do nothing but what is evil; but it is out of all question with me, that the worst and most vitiously inclined men do some good. And for those that can assert the most vertuous actions of unregenerate men to be express sins, they may pretend what Patrons they will of their opinion; but I am sure neither Scripture nor Reason will countenance

tenance it: for though it be true that the best actions of such men are not acceptable as the conditions of eternal life, because they are disjoined from habitual sanctification and true holiness; yet that they are not therefore sins, will sufficiently appear by what we have said not long since in the description of the nature of sin. Neither because they are defective in some circumstances do they cease to be good, or become sins; for then the best performances of the best men in this world would be sins too, because they are also defective in circumstances.

2. The second (or rather first) rank of sinners, consists of such as live in the habitual practice of great and enormous sins, whether of one kind or of many; I confess at the first sight, one would think these should be divided into two classes, whereof the first should be those profligate wretches and sons of *Belial*, who perfectly abandon themselves to the Temptation of the Devil, and the fury of their own lusts; and *add drunkenness to thirst*, as the Scripture expresseth it; or run from one kind of sin to another with a kind of greediness, as if (were it possible) they loved evil for its own sake, or had a spite both at God and their own Souls. And the second should be those more reserved and cautious sinners, who perhaps may carry it very demurely in many respects, but maintain some bosom sin which is as dear to them as their right eye, and as necessary as their right hand; and this they hope God will indulge them, *Oh it is a little one, and their souls shall live*. I say I should in civility have provided these a form by themselves, and not set them with the open and scandalous sinners, but that I observe God makes no difference between them: *His servants ye are* (saith the

Chap. III. *The various states of Sin and Sinners.*

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the Apostle) *to whom ye obey*; and it is no matter whether a man have many Masters or one, he is equally a slave that is led captive either way. And so S. James in that most remarkable passage, Chap. 2. vers. 10. *Whoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all.* Of which seeming Paradox he gives account in the next verse; *For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill, &c. i. e.* The reverence of every branch of God's Law, is built upon the consideration of his sovereignty and right to prescribe to us; which he impeaches whosoever dispenses with himself in the habitual breach of any one of his commands. For whatever particular he chooseth to transgress in, he derogates from the authority of the whole. Besides, it is to be considered, that all sins cannot stand together; some sins are as repugnant and contradictory to each other, as all are to virtue; and moreover, *non omnis fert omnia tellus*, it may be not the humour, or interest, or not suitable to the constitution of some man to act some sin; when yet it is neither love of virtue, nor the fear of God which makes him abstain from it. These therefore are justly joyned together; namely, all such as, live in the habitual practice of one or more notorious sins.

3. A third rank are such as, though they live not in the habit, yet are guilty of the act of some very great and flagitious crime; for there are some sins very deadly, even in single acts; as either containing a complication of many wickednesses together, as sacrilege, adultery, sedition; or such as can never be revoked, nor amends be made for them, as taking away a man's life; or never repeated nor

All Commissions of this high nature, imply a perfect choice of the will, & so are of the same deadly nature with an habit; being the same thing in principle, which that is in product and conclusion.

repented

repented of, as to murder a man's self, and several others. Now these being of so deadly a nature, every man that hath any sense of vertue or care of his own soul, ought ever to be sufficiently guarded against them, and at utter defiance of them; and he that can be so careless as to be found guilty of any such, betrays the great Atheism and security of his heart. And for this reason the miscarriage of *David*, in the business of *Bathsheba* and *Uriah*, lays such an horrible blot upon him, and needed all that repentance whereof we have the footsteps in the 51. *Psalm*.

4. The fourth and last rank are they that avoid both the habit and the act of greater sins, yet allow themselves in the frequent commission of lesser, and persevere in them without repentance. By lesser sins I mean, both such as I reckoned up before under the name of infirmities, and more particularly such as these following. When a man dares not give himself up to beastly sensuality, yet will too much humour and caress his body in meats and drinks, and pleasures; or will not steal and couzen, but will be covetous, and have his heart too much upon the world; that dares not cast off the duties of Religion, but will indulge himself to be remiss and flat in them; and several of this nature too easie to be observed. Now these kinds of sins are the more dangerous, in that partly our Consciences not being presently startled at them as at greater crimes, we more easily admit them, or they insensibly steal upon us: from whence it comes to pass that they become frequent, and so arise to a great number, and seem to equal that way, what they have not in weight. These therefore if they be suffered to pass unregarded, grow to a great danger, since no danger is
little

little when once it is esteemed so: and besides, though these may pass for inadvertencies when they are once or rarely committed; yet it must be a vicious neglect of our selves, when they are frequent and ordinary, forasmuch as all sincere vertue is awakened to greater diligence by every sensible declension: to which add especially, that whatsoever sin, and how little soever it be, if not repented of when it is come to our knowledge, is by that means become a voluntary transgression increasing its guilt *ex post facto*. These are the principal stations of sin, or the several ways upon which a man is denominated a sinner in the language of Scripture, and of wise men.

But to the end we may render this important point as clear as we can, and now also come more directly to the Parable before us; we will take notice of the Psalmist David's distribution of sinners into a threefold *Classis*; Psal. 1. vers. 1. *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornfull.*

First, some he calls ungodly, (*ἀνομῶν*, the LXXII. render it,) such as having not a true sense of piety in them, stand fair for any temptation. The Hebrew *רשעים*, properly signifies turbulent, malecontent, and seditious persons fit for any mischief. And such is the case of those that have not God before their eyes, nor the principles of Religion in their hearts; they are ready to list themselves for the Devil's service; therefore the Psalmist describeth them as *standing in counsel*, as it were deliberating a defection.

The second rank he calls by the name of *Sinners*: that is actual transgressors; such as are not only disposed for the Devil's service; by the loose-

ness of their principles, and the turbulency of their spirits, their vicious inclination, but have actually entred into it, have engaged themselves in a way and course of sin, and therefore are said to *stand in the way*: i. e. not only resolved upon their course, but proceeding and making progress from sin to sin towards destruction.

3. The third sort he calls *Scorners*, those that have not only debauched the light of their own Conscience, and all other principles of virtue, but have extinguished them to; and therefore being now arrived at the pinnacle of prophaneness, laugh at that which they formerly feared, and endeavour to make the reasons of Religion as ridiculous and contemptible to others, as they are insignificant with themselves. These are in the highest form of wickedness, and therefore are said to *sit in the seat of Scorners*, as being settled in their way, and very seldom or never reclaimed.

And this brings me to the Prodigal Son, as we have him described in the Parable: He is gone beyond the first form, being not in the deliberative, but in the actual pursuit of a sinfull course; and yet he is not arrived at *the seat of the Scornor*, but he is *in the way of Sinners*. And we are now to discover and trace him in that his way and course of sin; which we shall endeavour to do, guiding our selves by the thread of the Parable.

S. Luke

S. Luke 15. vers. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

12. The younger Son said to his Father, Father, give me the portion of goods that fallerh to me. And he divided to them his living.

13. And not many days after, the younger Son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far Country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

14. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15. And he went and joyned himself to a Citizen of that Country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

CHAP. IV.

The Prodigal's Risk; or Sin's Progress.

The CONTENTS.

- § I. Pride is ordinarily the first beginning of a sinfull course, proved by the fall of Angels, of Men, the temptation of our Saviour and his first doctrine, in order to the recovery of man.
- § II. The second instance of defection, is, casting off the sense of God, and a Providence, and laying aside the duties of worship; the intimate conjunction and dependence of piety and morality upon each other mutually.

- §. III. *Habitual sin not only brings a guilt, but destroys the powers of the soul: what talents God bestows upon the generality of mankind: of free will, natural reason, conscience, providence, and divine illumination; and how vice imbezils them all.*
- §. IV. *When men have abused their powers and talents, they become slaves of the Devil; how such a condition lays them both open to him, and fits them for his service.*
- §. V. *Sin is extreme drudgery in all the instances thereof.*
- §. VI. *And makes very bad returns, not affording any tolerable satisfaction when a man hath yielded to it; particularly the unsatisfactoriness of bodily pleasure, worldly riches, and applause.*
- §. VII. *The sad and desolate condition of an habitual sinner at last, when the pleasures and profits of sin fail and desert him.*

IN the words of our Saviour, now recited, we may plainly observe this to be the method of the Prodigal's ruine.

1. *He is impatient of the restraints of his Fathers Family, and not being content with his provision, he therefore desires to be at his own disposal; which having obtain'd,*

2. *Then he departs from his Fathers house, and goes into a far Country.*

3. *Being there, he mispends his stock in riotous living.*

4. *Having mispent his own stock, and being thereby reduced to want, he is constrained to become a slave or servant.*

5. *In his service he is put to extreme drudgery, being appointed to keep swine.*

6. *Be-*

6. Besides the baseness of his employment, he is used with great severity and hardship, forced to feed on husks.

7. So deplorably dealt with, as not to have husks enough to supply nature, and therefore is ready to perish.

And these seven steps are as plainly discernible in the course of the mystical Prodigal, as of the literal; I mean, in him that goes on in a way of sin against God, as in him that rebels against an earthly Parent: as shall be now made appear in particular.

First, the *præludium* to the Son's defection, is his impatience of the restraint of his Father's family and government; together with an opinion of his own sufficiency to dispose of and shift for himself. Thereupon he comes to his Father, *Father give me the portion, &c.* as if he had said, "I am now come to years of discretion, and doubt not but I am able to govern my self and manage my own affairs; set me out therefore my share, that I may but have whereupon to employ my self, and grant me my liberty, and I shall give you no further trouble. Under the notion of a Son, make me not always a boy; give me but leave to be a man once, and I fear not to acquit my self as such. And thus it is with the sinner, pride, elation of mind, and self-confidence make the first step to his ruine. *Pride goes before a fall, (saith Solomon) and a high mind before destruction.* It intoxicates the understanding, and makes the mind giddy and inconsiderate; it suffers a man to take no sober counsel, to hearken to nothing but what soothes and flatters him; and thence he becomes rash, precipitant, and adventurous; it per-

mits him not to take true measures of himself, but over rates his deserts, and over-values his capacity.

And thus being blown up with a conceit of himself, he presently grows male-content with his condition; and finding himself restrained, the proud waves of his passion rage and swell against all that bounds and checks them, and this rage casts up mire and dirt, wherewith divine providence it self is bespattered: as if either God knew not what was good for such a man, or envied his felicity, or grudged his satisfaction; or at least pleased himself in putting unnecessary restraints upon him. He finds his condition not to his mind, and not being willing to bring his mind to that, he is tempted to run upon adventures, and to make experiments, that he may give his mind full scope and contentment. Hence it is (as I observed before) that the wicked in the sacred Language are called *Reshagim*, unquiet, seditious and turbulent: pride and discontent prompting them to unruly attempts against God, disputing his prerogative, and breaking down the Laws and Boundaries he hath settled. Either such men conceit God hath not been benign enough, in the provisions of his care and providence; or the instances of duty are too many and too hard, and too great intrenchments made upon human liberty thereby; that God consulted his own prerogative in the constitution of his Laws rather than his wisdom, and the reason of things, and good of his Creatures; that man might be more happy if he were left to his own counsels. Would God permit them, they think nothing so sweet, as *meram haurire libertatem*, pure and unconfined liberty; that all restraint is intolerable slavery to a generous mind; and
imagi-

imagining there must needs be some admirable delights in those things God forbids, have thereupon a mighty mind and huge *impetus* upon them, to try those things above all other, whatever come of it. Such kind of mutinous thoughts, such jealousies and suspicions are the immediate issue of pride, and the seminalities of all rebellion against God.

It is the current opinion of Divines, that it was only this height of pride which ruined the Apostate Angels: for indeed, it is not easily imaginable what else should do it, in regard they being (before their Fall) bright intellectual Beings, no cloud of ignorance could probably so overwhelm them, as to betray them to that fatal miscarriage: and being also pure spiritual Substances, they lay under no corporeal allurements. It seems therefore necessary to conclude, that an overweening reflection upon their own height, fooled them into that presumption to forget themselves, and to vie with the Almighty. And this seems to be plainly enough glanced at by the Prophet, when he describes the fall of proud *Sennacherib*; Isa. 14. 12, 13, 14. *How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning? — For thou hast said in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: — I will be like the most High, &c.*

And undoubtedly this was the ruine of our first Parents, when mankind first turned Prodigal. God had dealt most liberally and benignly with them, as a gracious Father; he brought not them into the world, till he had furnished it like a large house, with all things necessary for their accommodation and delight; night and day were distinguished, sea and land separated, the earth blessed,

Ecclesiastic.
10. 12, 13.
Pride is
the begin-
ning of
a Pa-
Sin, &c.

a Paradise planted with all delicacies; and then he brings this his younger Son, Man, as to a plentiful Table of most delightfull entertainments. Besides this, he put all inferiour Creatures in subjection to him, as to their young Lord and Master; nay, makes that higher order of glorious Spirits, the Angels, to minister to him, and keep watch about him; and above all placed him in his own eye, under the light of his countenance, designed him for yet greater and unspeakable felicities, as his favourite and darling.

Now if after all this, it had pleased God to have put somewhat a severe restraint upon him, it ought justly to have seemed easie and reasonable, being sweetned by so great obligations. But the Divine Majesty, to shew that in this also he remembered the kindness of a Father, makes his Laws and Government as gentle as his Favours were great: for in the midst of an huge indulgence, and that large scope of all the Trees in the Garden, he laid an interdict but upon one, saying, *Of all the Trees in the Garden you may freely eat, save only the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the Garden; of that ye shall not eat lest ye die.* Who could now think any thing should become a temptation strong enough in this case to debauch mankind? Notwithstanding here the Serpent finds occasion to set Pride on work, and to raise a discontent; and first he begins thus, *Gen. 3. 1. Hath God said, &c. q.d.* “Is it not a mistake that you are forbidden that Fruit? was that the meaning of the Almighty? possibly your gracious Creator had no such intention; for why should you be restrained in this? why not left perfectly to your own election? have not you faculties to choose, and desires to gratifie? why

“ why should they be curbed or denied? sure he
 “ never made a power which was not to come in-
 “ to act, nor a capacity that was not to be satis-
 “ fied: nay, this one abridgment despoils you
 “ perfectly of your liberty; law and freedom are
 “ incompetent; you are not used like Sons, if
 “ you be thus chained up. And what necessity is
 “ there to set such a fence about that one Tree a-
 “ bove all the rest? is it to exercise authority ar-
 “ bitrarily over you, or to tempt your patience?
 “ or rather, is there not some great good which
 “ he knows in that fruit, and envies you the par-
 “ ticipation of? why should not you that were
 “ made in his Image, be like Gods in this also,
 “ knowing good and evil? After this manner, the
 old enemy of God and man tempers his poisons;
 partly seeming to doubt of the meaning of the
 command, partly insinuating suspicions of God’s
 goodness, but principally blowing them up with
 pride and self-conceit; which whilst they swell
 withall, they break to pieces, and thus fell our first
 Parents.

And the same Tempter, both knowing now the
 nature of man, and encouraged also with this suc-
 cess, attempts the second *Adam, Christ Jesus*, after the
 same manner, *Matt. 4.* for though it be true (which
 is commonly observed) that the Devil was put to
 it, to try all his artifices upon our Saviour, and
 to assail him both by the lusts of the flesh, the lust
 of the eye, and the pride of life; yet if we care-
 fully consider, we shall find, that the effort of ruin-
 ing him by pride and vain-glory, was that which
 he principally trusted to and aimed at in all the
 temptations; but more conspicuously in the two
 former of them; for so *vers. 3.* when finding him an-
 hungred, he begins thus: *If thou be the Son of God,*
command

command that these stones be made bread. Our Saviour came not long since from his Baptism, and then as we read in the last verse of the foregoing Chapter, a voice came to him from Heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.* Of which the Devil endeavouring to make his advantage, addresses himself to him. *q. d.* " If
 " God own thee as his Son, (as he pretends to do)
 " let him do something prodigious and pompous
 " that may give remarkable testimony to it: use
 " thy interest in him for some signal miracle, especially to supply thy necessity now thou art hungry; for certainly he will rather do that, than suffer his beloved Son to famish. Ordinary men must depend upon common providence, but sure you may expect something more signal and worthy of that relation, if it be true, that you are the Son of God. No (saith our Saviour) *Man lives not by bread only, &c.* If I am the Son of God, as I am assured I am; I must so much the more be at my Father's disposal, and not prescribe to him. He hath several ways to supply my necessity, and I will leave the particular manner of it to his election. Then the Devil taketh him, and sets him upon a Pinnacle of the Temple, and urges him, *If thou be the Son of God, cast thy self down, for it is written, he shall give his Angels charge over thee, &c. q. d.* " To be the
 " Son of God, and to have it set off with no pomp
 " nor illustrious circumstance, is a very mean thing,
 " unworthy of you, and useless to you. *Assure*
 " your self, if he own you in that quality and relation, he will interpose between you and the
 " greatest danger you can incur; and by some
 " such experiment you shall draw the eyes of all
 " men upon you. Both this and the former attack

tack are like to that of his Brethren, Jo. 7. 4. *If thou do these things, shew thy self to the world. q. d.* Consult thy fame and reputation, aggrandize thy self by some magnificent circumstance or other. But (saith Our Saviour) *it is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God, i. e.* "I am not to require other proofs of God's power or providence over me, than he thinks fit to give; I must not thrust my self upon danger, but when he casts me upon it, then I may assure my self of his interposition for my safety."

Now since this temptation to pride was the engine with which the first *Adam* was ruined, and the second *Adam* assaulted; there can be little reason to doubt, but it is so also with the generality of men. And albeit the more visible and immediate motives to some sins may be profit or pleasure, yet that which is the first wheel, and sets all on work, is (as I have hinted) an arrogant opinion of our own worth or wisdom, and derogation from the Divine Wisdom or Justice in the frame of his Laws, and methods of his providence: as if he had not consulted so well the conveniency of our natures, but that we could provide better for our selves than he hath done, If we were permitted to be our own carvers; from whence proceeds an impatience of his Government, and an inclination to rebell, and cast off his yoke; as it were easie to make appear in all the instances of sin, whether intemperance, fornication, injustice, or any the like: but that I think it needless in so plain a case.

But there is one thing I cannot omit to observe in further confirmation of this point; namely, that our Saviour when he came into the world to restore mankind, knowing well their disease, (like a wise Physician of Souls) finds it necessary to cure them

them by the contrary : therefore in the first place, he prescribes to them a profound humility, as the most sovereign Antidote against sin, and the only principle of stability in virtue ; he I say, considering they had fallen by pride, lays the foundation of their recovery in lowliness of spirit ; injoyning that men submit their own reasonings to the wisdom of God, and by faith depend upon him. And declaring that those who will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, or receive his religion, must do it as little children ; that is, must come to it without pride or prejudice, and be ready to believe what he dictates to them, without dispute or diffidence : and in short, must deny themselves and follow him. Which one lesson if we thoroughly learn, we cut off all the Avenues of Satan, and everlastingly secure our selves against all temptation to Apostasie from Religion and rebelling against God.

2. The second instance of the Son's defection, is his departure from his Father. *He gathers all together, and takes his journey into a far Country.* Whereas the Elder Son always abides with his Father, this Youngster, as he desired not to be at his Father's provision, so he was equally unwilling to be under his eye, and the awe of his presence : the inspection of a Father would check his freedom, and restrain him in the full swing of pleasure he designed to take. Home was an homely thing, dull and tedious to him ; but a foreign Country would gratifie his curiosity, and minister some new delights to him. Besides, there he should be without controule, accountable to no body, which was the very thing his pride had made most valuable with him.

Now

Now that he had obtained what he desired, his portion and his liberty, he valued not the comfort of his Father's countenance; nor needed his counsel, nor set by his blessing: for indeed, he intended so to live, as that he could not hope for it.

Thus the Prodigal Son, and every habitual sinner treads in his steps. *Longinqua Regio*, (saith S. Austin, 2. Evā. 2. c. 33.) is *oblivio Dei*: by the far Country is meant forgetfulness of God. And, saith S. Jerom, *To depart from God is not local*, (for God is every-where present) *but to be alienated in our minds and affections from him.* Agreeably to which in the 73. Psal. v. 26. where we read, *They that forsake the Lord shall perish*, the vulgar Latin strictly following the Hebrew, hath it, *qui elongant se à Deo*, those that put themselves as far off from God as they can. And so holy Job, chap. 21. 14. notes it to be the humor of prophane and profligate persons, to say to the Almighty, *Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy way.* For it is manifest, that as the sense of God is the great support and comfort of all good men in trouble, their great animation and encouragement in all good duties, and of mighty efficacy upon them to preserve them from all temptation to evil; so it is equally the dread and torture of all wicked men, and that which if it doth not check and restrain their wickedness, will be sure to deprive them of the pleasure of it. Wherefore when they cannot hinder that observant Majesty from overlooking them, they are forced for their own quiet to be so absurd, as to put the grossest gullery upon themselves, and content themselves with the sottish security, or turning away their eyes from beholding him.

Sciendum est non locorum distantia, sed affectionis non esse cum Deo, vel ab eo recedere.
S. Hieron. ep. 146.

Thus

Thus *Adam* when he had sinned hid himself in the Garden from the presence of the Lord; for not only the Majesty, Power and Justice of God, strike a terror to a guilty Conscience, but the very contemplation of such purity and perfection, shames and reproaches it. Nor is the apprehension of God only troublesome to the offender after he hath committed sin,* but it is able to blast the very Embryo, to nip it in the bud, to disturb the deliberations, and to be sure defeats much of the pleasure of conception. For if the presence of a grave and vertuous man carries that awe, as that the sinner is rendred impotent to his purposes, as if he were under a charm, (the truth of which we see confirmed by frequent experience) how much more must needs the thoughts of an omni-present Majesty, an all-seeing Eye, a holy and righteous Judge, cool the heats, abate the courage, and stop the career of a sinner? To which purpose it is the observation of several Learned men upon that passage of the Psalmist, Psal. 14. 1. *The fool hath said in his heart there is no God.* They conceive, That it might as well, and as consistently with the Original be rendered, *The fool hath said in his heart, &c. i. e.* Wicked men (to the intent that they might go on the more comfortably, and uncontrolledly in their sins,) would fain perswade themselves there is no God.

But to speak a little more closely and particularly to this matter; forasmuch as I noted even now from *S. Jerome*, that God being an infinite Majesty, we can neither approach him, nor depart from him strictly and locally: there are therefore these three ways, by which (according to the language of the Holy Scripture) we can come near to God; (*viz.*) either 1. by acts of immediate worship, as prayer

prayer and praises, and the like; or 2. by living under a quick sense of his providence; or 3. by yielding obedience to his commands: which three things in conjunction make up the whole nature of true Piety and Religion. And in respect of these the Holy men of old, such as *Enoch, Noah, Abraham, &c.* are said to have *walked with God*. That is, they framed themselves to obedience to all his commands; they composed themselves to a submission unto, and compliance with, his providential dispensations; and (to the intent that they might be assisted and animated in both those) they constantly addressed themselves to him, by acts of worship for his influence and blessing. And again, on the other side, those evil men who are said to depart from God were such as either cast off the yoke of his obedience, or lived without a sense of his superintendence, or laid aside the care of his worship. And which is further observable, these three are hardly to be found separate from one another, because of the reciprocal influence they have upon each other.

For as in the former Triad, or instances of piety, whosoever lives under a sense of a providence, will endeavour to propitiate the Divine Majesty to himself, by all worship and dutifull observance, and he that makes Conscience of that, cannot ordinarily be so absurd, as to hope for the favour of a Wife and Holy Majesty, by the meer importunity of his devotions, without Conscience of obeying his commands; with respect to which it was well said by a pious Man in way of advice, *Leave not off praying to God, for either praying will make thee sinning, or continuing to sin, will make thee desist praying*. Again, he that worships and obeys a God, most certainly lives under a sense of him; for otherwise he could give

no account to himself, why he should put himself to the trouble of Worship, and the care of Obedience.

And then for the other Triad, or the three instances of impiety, he that lives wickedly, will in time lose all sense of a Providence, and consequently all Conscience of the duties of Worship : and on the other side, he that extinguishes either the belief of a providence, or (in a fair way to it) casts off all care of religious Worship, will not fail to run riot in his life, when he hath rid himself of those awfull principles that did curb and restrain him : of the truth of all which we have a memorable example, *Gen. 4. Cain* had betrayed a great remissness in Religion, by the carelessness of his Sacrifice ; whereas *Abel*, who believed firmly in God, thinking nothing too good for his service, brought of the fattest and best of his flock to God ; *Cain* thought any thing would serve turn, and accordingly carried away the tokens of God's displeasure and disdain ; but *vers. 8.* he invites his Brother *Abel* into the field ; where, as the *Samaritan* version intimates, some discourse passed between them : and the *Jerusalem Targum* tells us particularly, that *Cain* stiffly denied a providence, which *Abel* as strenuously asserted ; and this doctrine of *Cain* was very agreeable to his negligent worship before, and his execrable practice after : for from this denial of a providence, he presently proceeds to the murder of his Brother ; and not long after that, *vers. 16.* we read *Cain went out from the presence of the Lord* : he now agreeably to those principles, and consequently of such villanous practices, cast off, renounced, and defied Religion. And the text further adds, he went *and sojourned in the Land of Nod*, which, who so list to interpret allegori-

allegorically, would very agreeably to the series of my present discourse say, meant that he vagrant-like, wandred on in a course of dissoluteness, having now lost all card and compass to direct him.

But what need we farther evidence in so plain a case, to which our own experience, and the observation of all the world gives testimony: for what is it that encourages any man in a generous undertaking where the exercise of vertue is attended with hazard and difficulty, with labour and trouble, with patience and self-denial, but the belief of a providence? what bears him up, that the privacy of the fact abates not his edge, nor the tediousness of accomplishment wearies out his endeavours, nor the opposition quails his spirit, but only this, that he sees him that is invisible, and having God before him, thinks himself upon the most ample Theatre, and is sure of success and reward. And what is there that keeps alive this sense of God and providence, that neither Atheistical suggestions debauch his Principles, nor multitude of ill examples cool his heat, and corrupt his resolution, but his approaches to God by exercises of devotion, whereby he refreshes the worthy notions of his mind, and hath them as it were new engraven, and made more legible upon the tables of his heart? He goes by the duties of Religion like *Moses* into the Mount of God; and returns with the Tables of God's Law written a fresh by the finger of God. Such a man is ashamed of sin, and disdains every ungenerous action, coming newly from the presence of God, the approaches of such a glory diffuse some rays upon him, and his face shines as the same *Moses's* did upon the like occasion. In short, he cannot without great violence to

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himself condescend to entertain the Devil into his bosome, which is yet warm with that divine Guest the Holy Ghost. Contrariwise, take a Man that lives without a sense of God, and he hath no care of, nor value for himself; he hath not a mind large enough for any generous design, he is poor spirited, hurried by every fear, baffled by every danger, surprized and carried away by every temptation. The vigorous notions of God are either extinct by the profaneness of his life, or languish by the neglect of religious duties: there is no Angel-Guardian about his Soul, no generous disdain of sin in his heart, he hath neither the help of God, nor the strength of a man. Upon all which it is apparent, that departing from our Father's House, living beside the notions of God, and without the exercises of devotion to actuate those notions, is the ready way to all sin and folly. Wherefore, as pride and self-conceit begin the mutiny in our Souls against God, so neglecting his presence, suffers it to grow to a dangerous head; and as that was the first step towards a wicked course, this is the second.

3. Thirdly, the Prodigal having now gotten from under the eye of his Father, gives himself a full swinge of liberty; lives *disorderly*, *foolishly*, and *viciously*; and by that means quickly exhausts the stock his Father had given him. Where ever there is temperance and prudent management a little will suffice, and will quickly grow to great riches: by frugality and industry most of the great States and Kingdoms in the world have been raised, as well as private fortunes; but luxury and riot have dilapidated and destroyed both the one and the other. For these making continual abstractions, without addition, quickly reduce the greatest sum

to a Cypher, and bring him to want of all things, who before had need of nothing, but grace and wisdom to use that which he had. This the Prodigal Son finds true by sad experience. And so it fares also with the sinner, or mystical Prodigal; when once he hath withdrawn himself from God's presence, that is, hath cast off the sense of God and Religion, and broken those reins that restrained his extravagancy, he presently rushes into all kind of debauchery; and in so doing, besides the black guilt he derives upon his Conscience, he wastes and imbezils the very talents and abilities God had endowed him with. For the more clear understanding of which, we will briefly, but distinctly consider these two things. 1. What is that portion or stock which God sets mankind up withall. 2. How and in what manner vice and dissolution of manners mispend and exhaust it.

And for the former of these though it is not to be doubted, but that God according to his paternal prerogative and wisdom, may, and doth variously dispense his gifts to his Children; yet it is certain he sends none of them out into the world without some talents to employ themselves upon, and to make a vertuous improvement of. And amongst all of that kind these four following are both the most rich and valuable in themselves, and also (such is the divine bounty) most generally bestowed. (*viz*) 1. Freedom of choice. 2. Understanding, Mind, or Conscience. 3. Experience of a wise and gracious intertexture of favours and chastisements in the course of Providence. 4. Special intimations of his own mind and will.

In the first place I recount freedom of chusing for our selves as part of the common portion of mankind in general : which I do the rather, because I observe the Fathers generally to understand this to be the special intendment of this passage of the Parable. *Divisit iis substantiam, He divided unto them his living* : that is, (saith

* *Dedit eis S. * Jerome*) He bound not man under the rigid bonds of necessity, whereby he should be forcibly over-ruled and determined to one thing, but put him in a capacity of making his own choice, to the end that being hereby distinguished from beasts, and more like his Maker, he might be capable of vertue and reward : and that as nothing should make him miserable without his own act and consent, so he might have the comfort and delight of co-operating freely towards his own good and felicity.

i. e. non ex necessitate sed ex voluntate, ut virtus haberet locum, ut à ceteris animantibus distaremus, dum ad exemplum Dei, permissum est nobis facere quod velimus.

That this accomplishment of humane nature is a great and inestimable talent no man can doubt, forasmuch as hereby man is made to be what he is, that is, to be master of himself and his own actions, and obnoxious to none but God himself; being neither drawn by invisible wires, but moved voluntarily, and from an inward principle, nor hurried by external accidents, but steers his own course, is not at the mercy of every temptation, but can make his own choice in spite of the Devil.

And that God set out man into the world thus endowed, there is as little reason to question. For in the first place, we are sure God made all things good,

good, that is, designed for good ends, and also capable of attaining them. And he that fitted all the inferiour Creation for their proper ends, most certainly did not leave that excellent piece of his workmanship so defective, as not to be endowed with powers sufficient for the pursuit and attainment of his peculiar happiness. At least, it cannot be imagined, that infinite wisdom should contrive such a Creature as should be only able to

cross and act contrary to himself, but not to comply with him; which must be true if man had not originally a power of chusing good as well as evil. Again, were it not for this, there would be an absolute impossibility of giving account how sin came into the world, and of vindicating the providence of God in tying that clog of an earthly Body to an immortal Soul, but that by this concession the latter is made capable of governing the former; and abundance other great *Phænomena* of providence (which it is no time now to insist upon) are plainly insoluble otherwise than upon this supposition. But we need not insist upon the proof of fact that this was the condition of man in his first Creation, when he came out of the hands of God, for it is acknowledged by all Divines; and if it be otherwise with him since, we have intimated already where the fault lies, and shall shew it more particularly by and by.

2. The second Talent of mankind is Mind or Conscience, and I make use of both those terms, because I intend to join together both that which is called *Synteresis*, and that which is called properly *Syneidesis*, or Conscience. By the former of which, man having as it were a Standard within

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Καὶ τὸ τοῦτο δὲ ὅτι ἀ-
κατασκευάστως ποί-
ηται τὸ ἀγαθόν καὶ τὸ
κακόν, ὅτι φύσιν μὴ
ἔχον καὶ ἀσπαιρέτων,
ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁρῶντες
ἡμεῖς τὸν κόσμον, καὶ τοῖς
ἐν αὐτῷ ἀνθρώποις
οὐκ ἐκινῆσαν. *Greg.*
Naz. orat. 1.

Chap. 3.
§. 3.

him-

Just. Mart.
Apol. 1.

Οὐσία τῷ ἀνθρώ-
πῳ τὸ λογικόν ἐστιν ὃ
παρέπαιε τὸ αὐτε-
ξέσιον, παντὶ δὲ λογι-
κῶν αὐτεξέσιον, δι-
δωσιν ἢ ἡμῖν ὁ κύ-
ριος τὸ λόγον ἔνα
χρησιμεῖν καὶ τῷ αὐτε-
ξέσιῳ, &c.

Τὰ δὲ ἡθι-
κα μαθη-
ματα παν-
τας ἀν-
θρώπους ἡ
εὐσεία ἐ-
παίδευσε.
Theodoret.
de virtute
Act. orat.
12.

himself of good and evil, he may guide himself in the choice of his actions; and by the latter he is able to reflect upon himself, and comparing his actions and carriage with the Standard or Law of reason in his own mind, pass a judgment upon himself; that is, either blame and condemn, or acquit and comfort himself accordingly. This Talent the old S. *Justin* calls *Ἐμφυτὴν παρὰ γένεως ἀνθρώπων, σπέρμα τῷ λόγῳ*, and *σπερματικὸν λόγῳ μεσθ*. *A particle of the Divine and Original wisdom, or a scion of the true λόγος, or eternal word ingrafted*

upon the Soul of every man. And it is this which *Theophylact* takes to be especially meant in this text. *The substance* (saith he) *which the Father divided amongst his Sons was Reason, which God gave in common to all mankind, and that in conjunction with freedom of mind; for every being that hath the use of reason, hath also liberty of election; the latter*

affording a Field or Theatre for the former to act upon, and the former enabling him to use the latter well. And indeed, it was wondrous expedient that since God had given mankind the Talent of liberty, that he should therewith bestow upon him a principle of reason to restrain and govern that liberty; that so having not only Sails to move him, but a Compass to direct him, he might shape his course agreeably to those ends God designed him for; or more plainly, having a copy of the divine mind implanted in his Soul, he might make the elections of his will conformable to those of his Maker. For since (as I said before) Men and Angels are not naturally and necessarily carried to their ends as other beings are, but may either move regularly towards them, or decline from them at their own choice;

choice ; had not God put upon them this bias of reason to incline them the right way, they would have been in danger to have made such an exorbitant use of their freedom, as to have given the whole Creation much greater disturbance than yet they have done. And as well the truth of this assertion, as the value of this Talent, will appear most remarkably if we do but consider what great improvements some have attained to by the alone use of Reason, having never any other Talent of supernatural revelation afforded them that we know of.

In contemplation of which *Tully* recounts it a prime favour of the divine Majesty to humane nature, *That he had endowed their minds with natural notions, which are to them the seeds and principles of knowledge and vertue.* * And he further adds, *Were it not that God hath thus furnished the mind with such a stock of proleptick principles of knowledge we could not have ever come to understand any thing,* and all industry, study and inquiry had been utterly lost and fruitless ; but by the means of these natural notions we have a kind of anticipation, an intellectual taste and relish of truth and falshood, good and evil, and so a measure to govern our selves by in our elections and profecutions.

Quod comprehensionem dedisset quasi normam scientiæ & principium sui. Sine quibus nec intelligi quicquam nec queri nec disputari possit. Tully Acad. lib. 1. & 4.

3. The third Talent given to all mankind for their improvement is the observable wise order and method of Divine Providence, wherein there is such an admirable intertexture of mercies and afflictions, as that neither a constant series of adversities and cross accidents shall break their spirit, or ingulph men in despair ; nor yet such a constant course of perpetual prosperity as to render them too light and airy, but a moderate interchange of both, to make them grave and serious. And be-

See Acts
14.v.16,17.

sides, both these dispensed not fortuitously, but with such discrimination, as that ordinarily men may not only be assured of a Providence in the general, but be able to observe the divine displeasure against sin and wickedness by the one, and his approbation of honesty and goodness by the other; and so consequently be both directed in their choice, and provoked to an answerable prosecution.

And although it be very true that such exact course of providence be not now ordinarily observable in the world, because God having now made a full and clear discovery of his whole mind to the Sons of Men by extraordinary revelation; as there is no need of this lesser light when a far greater shines clearly, so also it seems good to his divine wisdom to make the course of his providence more involved and intricate in many cases, both for the tryal of good men, and the just hardning of the wicked and unbelieving. Nevertheless it is not credible that such a cryptick method should be the common course of his providence where those reasons cease, and where he hath afforded no better light.

And besides, we are sure *de facto*, that there was such a legible providence as we speak of in the most ancient and Patriarchal times; when it was common to observe the finger of God by some calamity or other, pointing out and branding the offender, and his blessing visibly descending upon and crowning worthy and vertuous persons.

Thus God (whilst as yet there was no revealed Law), did confirm and bear testimony to the laws of reason, and provide against the staggering and fluctuation of Men's minds, in deducing those natural conclusions by which they were then to govern

vern themselves, by the suffrage of his own providence. Consonantly to which it was, that the Scripture or Holy Writ concerning those times, is little more than an history of providence, or remarks of the good and evil that befel Men according to the demerits of their either vertuous or vicious behaviour; as whosoever considers the Books of *Moses* must acknowledge.

See to this purpose
Philo Jud. de vita Mosi, lib. 2. Isidor. Pseultus. lib. 4. Epist. 176. Hiero-

upon the Book of *Genesis* is called by S. Hieronym. Βίβλος ἱστορίας in *Isai. 12.*

And for the people of the *Jews* it is notorious, that the course of divine providence ran all along above ground amongst them, (although they were not without written laws and lively Oracles of God,) of which without prying into the counsels of the Almighty, we may easily satisfy our selves by a double account; namely, partly to afford the more full testimony to those sanctions of his amongst a hard-hearted People, partly also to supply the visible defect of those Laws in the most material rules of vertue; it pleased God to give intimation of his mind, and confirmation to the dictates of nature by such extraordinary attestations of his providence.

But as for the *Gentiles* who were destitute of the aforesaid advantage, having not *the more sure word of Prophecy* (as the Apostle calls it) there is no doubt to be made but the divine goodness did supply that defect, as to the greater lines of vertue and vice, by the plain legibility of his providence; at least ordinarily and far beyond what be doth amongst those that live under the full light of the Gospel: which whoso will not be induced to believe must justify his incredulity by perverseness, and call in question the faith of all the Histories

stories of those times and Countreys. And although we cannot deny, that it pleased God sometimes, even amongst those people, to walk in the dark, suffering the good and evil things that beset men to be no sure indications of his favour or displeasure, yet the rarity of the case appears by the salvo they found out for this *Phænomenon*: namely, they imagined that when rewards and punishments, or rather good and evil, were mismatched, and did not apply themselves to vertue and vice respectively; that it proceeded from some fatal necessity, which was superiour to the Gods, and not to be withstood or hindered by them. By which it appears, that for the most part they observed a just *Nemesis*, and righteous distribution of rewards and punishments in the course of the world. Which direction of providence added to the two former talents might be of great advantage to them, if not to make them truly good, yet certainly to make them less evil. And being thus general, as I have shewed, may be well called a third Talent of Mankind.

4. But I add in the fourth and last place, God hath so far consulted the good of Mankind, and is so open handed to his Children, that besides all the aforesaid, he frequently vouchsafes them some intimations or other of his mind, to enable them the better to understand their duty, and pursue their happiness.

As for such as are placed in his Church under the full and certain light of revelation, that are pressed upon by the mighty motives of unspeakable rewards and punishments in another world; and these inculcated upon them by a publick ministry maintained by God for that purpose; and above all are under the vital operations of his Holy Spirit; exciting

See Euseb.
prepar. E-
vang. l. 6.
c. 6.

Vid. paria
his apud
Herodot. in
Cleons edit.
London. p.
38.

citing their minds, fortifying their apprehensions, fixing their attentions, and giving them as it were a view of the transactions in the other world : This must be acknowledged a peculiar favour, and not common to all, as the other were ; yet if we consider well, we shall find that the advantages of God's Church do in some respects extend beyond the pale of it : for as we see the Sun affords some light to those upon whose Horizon he doth not appear, so we find that *Pythagoras* and several of the industrious and vertuously disposed *Pagans* reaped great benefit by those Oracles that were not given to them, but to the Nation of the *Jews*. And we may easily discover a great improvement in the moral discourses of *Pagans*, since our Saviour came into the World ; divine light reflecting as it were from the Church, (upon which the direct beams thereof fell) to the rest of the World. Besides which it is no way probable, that a good God should so far neglect so great a part of mankind as was called *Pagan*, as to afford them no intimations of his mind, towards the bettering of their reasonings in those matters of importance which he principally created them for. In respect to which *Tully* spake admirably, *Nemo unquam vir magnus sine afflatu divino*, That there was never a great and brave man in the world, but had some impulses and inspirations from the Almighty. And indeed when I seriously consider either the divine Attributes, or the experience of men, I see great reason to doubt whether ever there was that man that had not more or less some such kind of assistances from his Maker, till he himself rendered himself unworthy thereof. Which brings me to the second thing I promised to speak to; (*viz.*)

So it may seem that all mankind is God's Vineyard, S. Luke 13. 6. but the Jews the Fig-tree in the Vineyard.

Tully de Divinat.

2. Secondly, how vice and dissolusion of manners spend and exhaust this stock God hath set mankind up withall: and of this the account is very easie. For in the first place it is plain, that habits and facility of doing any thing, are procured by frequent and repeated acts: and as the more vertuous actions of any kind a man doth, the more prone he is to do so again, so every vicious action which a man commits begets a propension and inclination to others of the same kind. When a man hath used to subdue his passions to his reason, they easily submit and bear the yoke; but he that hath accustomed them to their full scope, they swell and rage, and will not easily be brought into order; and this will be true although those two men were supposed to have equally violent passions naturally, be it of what kind soever. Custome we call a second nature, but it hath the power to supplant the first and original nature, putting new propensions as another bias upon the Spirit. By which we see clearly how vice destroys the first talent of mankind, that freedom which God set them up withal. Which point gained, affords us resolution of another question (though not of this place) namely, hereby we see how it comes to pass, that good and vertuous men rejoyce in the easiness and delights of a vertuous course, when contrariwise evil and vicious men complain of impotency, and pretend the horrible difficulties thereof; for these contrary effects proceed from the same cause, and shew the mighty power of custome on both sides.

And then for the second talent of natural reason or understanding, nothing is more plain than that vicious practices blind the eyes of the mind, partly as the streams of lust and passion send up a cloud which

Tanta autem est corruptela mala consuetudinis, ut ab ea tanquam igniculi à natura dati extinguuntur.
Cic. de leg. l. 1.

which dulls the higher regions of the Soul ; partly also as luxury commonly brings a stupid slothfulness upon the Spirits of men, that they chuse rather to bury that talent, than be at the trouble to employ it ; but principally as all wickedness prejudices men, making it become their seeming interest to shut their eyes lest they should behold their shame, or make the prosecution of that more uneasy and uncomfortable to them, from which they are resolved not to desist. And for that faculty which is properly called Conscience, we have intimated already, that the frequent injuries done to it render it callous and insensible.

As for that which we called a third Talent, namely, the testimony which God in his providence usually gives to vertue, and the discountenance to vice : these the vicious man either Atheistically imputes to blind chance, because he observes some exceptions and irregularities in the method of their dispensation ; or else turns the arguments God affords him of gratitude into grounds of security, or his fatherly chastisements into occasion of sullenness and desperation, or one way or other renders this talent unusefull.

But if it please God to do something extraordinary, and awaken him by a peculiar address to him ; he doth as the *Romans* when *Petilius* fortunately digged up and brought to light the sacred Writings of *Numa Pompilius* ; which probably would have put them upon a better devotion than they were willing to comply with. The Consul swore the Books were *Dissolvendarum Religionum* ; *q. d.* not calculated for the present Age, whereupon they commanded them to be burnt. So the sinner stubbornly opposes the light which would reproach his practice and disturb his security. And thus

Tit. Liv.
lib. 40.

thus we have seen what stock God sets men up with, and how they mis-spend it.

Ὅτι ὁ
τῆς σωφρο-
σύνης ὁ ὁ-
τος ἡ γα-
λῖται, ἡ-
καὶ λιμὸς
ἰσχυρὸς,
&c. Chry-
sost. in lo-
cum.

Si servitus
fit obdientia
fracti
& abjecti
animi &
arbitrioca-
rentis sui,
quis neget
omnes le-
ves, omnes
cupidos,
omnes de-
nique im-
probos esse
servos? Cicer. Paradox. vid. etiam Philon. lib. Quod omnis vir pri-
vus liber.

4. But to go on with the Parable, the next news we hear of the Prodigal, is, that having spent all his patrimony in careless and riotous living, and a famine succeeding his profusion, he is now reduced to extremity, and knows not whither to betake himself; wherefore having no other choice, he is constrained to joyn himself to a Citizen of that Countrey; that is, to become a slave. It was wisely and truly said by one of the Ancients, that frugality and temperance were *civilis sapientia*, homebred Philosophy; or the most cheap and commendious way of attaining all moral wisdom and happiness: for they make life easie, and temptation little; they prevent care, and shut out fear; they raise the spirit of a man by bestowing on him a kind of self-sufficiency; such a man doth not maliciously despise the world, because he cannot attain it, for he finds it in his power to arrive at much, and in his temper to need but little, and so is truly above it.

These with their inseparable companion Industry, are as it were the roots of a Patrimony, which not only keep it alive and flourishing, but also make it fruitfull and multiply; but the contrary vices are such sottish sins that they destroy the very stock they grow upon, and undermine their own foundation; that is, they eat out themselves and that which raised them, and should have maintained them. And which is yet worse, they do not only starve themselves, but cut off a man's retreat, and cast him into a condition that he could not live

live comfortably if he should return to sobriety. For it is in this case as Cicero said of *Dionysius of Syracuse*, He had lived so wickedly, and exercised so much tyranny and cruelty, that having procured the common hatred of mankind, it was too late to think of reintegrating himself by taking up and changing his course. His wickedness had been too great to let his conversion be believed real, and his injuries too many to hope for security in a way of mildness. *Scelus sceleris protegendum est*, he must now go on and justify, or at least protect his former villanies by more and greater.

*Salvus esse
non potuit,
si sanus es-
se cupisset.
Tulc. Q. 5.*

So it is with voluptuous persons, by a long habit they have made excesses almost necessary to their bodies, and such excesses do so harass Men's fortunes, that they cannot long correspond with such unreasonable occasions; together herewith ease and sloth the concomitants of luxury do so relax Men's nerves and enfeeble their constitution, that they are rendered incapable of supplying the defects of their fortune by their own industry; so that between the necessity of expending much, and the impossibility of gaining any thing, the difficulties of returning to sobriety become as great and discouraging, as the pleasures of riots are charming and bewitching.

Hence it comes to pass, that such Men usually reason with themselves, as the unjust Steward in the Gospel, *Dig I cannot, and to beg I am ashamed*; wherefore they must apply themselves to some remedy as desperate as the disease; some bold and daring course, some great and horrible sin must relieve them out of the straits former wickedness hath cast them into. And thus the Prodigal having spent all, joins himself to a Citizen. Who this Citizen is S. Jerome tells us, it is the Devil, he

he is the busy Negotiatour of this World, *that goes about seeking whom he may devour*, and is ready to lift those into his service, who (having mis-spent their Talents) are by a vicious necessity disposed for his purposes. For such as have forfeited their own liberty are fit to be his slaves; such as have driven away the good spirit, shall be sure to be haunted with this evil spirit. And they that have put out their own eyes, and blinded their minds, are fit Subjects of the Kingdom of darkness.

None but such as have been accustomed to debauch their own faculties and stifle their Consciences, can yield him ready obedience. But those that have sotted themselves with sensuality, are swollen with pride or malice, or by some vicious habit or other have lost the command of themselves, and the protection of the Almighty; these fall readily into his snare, and according to the phrase of the Apostle, *are taken captive by him at his will*. And the use he puts them to we shall see in the next particular. For,

2 Tim. 2.
26.

5. The Prodigal is put to feed Swine. It is amongst the great calamities of a riotous life that first it effeminates Men by soft indulgencies whilst their fortunes hold out, and then afterwards breaks their spirits when adversity befalls them, by a shamefull reflexion upon their beastly folly. And between these two, such Men are seldom or never after capable of any generous and manly employment; from whence it comes to pass, that they are ordinarily by the just judgment of God condemned either to the most ridiculous and contemptible, or to the most sordid and vile offices. And such we may be sure will be the case of the Mystical Prodigal being now become a slave to Satan.

It

It was a sad instance of the tyranny and insolence of the Devil over apostate Mankind, that he fooled them to such a base abjection of mind, as to give him a kind of religious worship, appearing to them under the form of a Goat, or some other the most infamous of brute Creatures. This is too well known to have been commonly done amongst the *Pagans*; and it seems probable that this vile Idolatry was invented and required by that malicious spirit, not more to affront the Almighty by intercepting his worship, than to scorn and insult over humane nature by such a sordid prostitution. But it is not only Idolatry, but all kind of *sin is the Devil's work*. And whosoever renders himself up to the power of any sin, doth his drudgery as truly as those poor abused Heathens; for though he doth not with the same formalities ridiculously bow himself to a beast, he doth the same thing in effect when he prostitutes himself to brutality. What more ignoble thing than for him that hath an immortal Soul, an understanding Mind and free faculties, by which he is fit for the conversation of God and Angels, to forget all this, and humble himself to serve a beast? Nor is it any matter of difference whether a man serve his own beast or another man's, I mean the beast within him or without him; some beast or other every vicious man serves.

He that indulges rage and passion ministers to a Tiger; and he that addicteth himself to sordid craft and subtlety worships a Fox. He that basely plays the Hypocrite serves the Dog, or the Hyæna. He that gives himself up to lasciviousness, worships a Goat; and he that is a servant of meat and drink, makes a God of his Belly, and very properly may be said to serve Swine.

vid. Arr. ani Epi. stic. lib. 1. cap. 9.

It is a well known passage in *Plato*, where he supposes, that when men's Souls are departed from their present Bodies, they are adjudged to actuate and inform some such Creatures as they had most resembled in their humour and practice whilst they were alive; but without such a transmigrati-on after death, which we are sure is both false and ridiculous, all vicious men may be said to be transformed in this life as aforesaid: for though they retain the outward shape, they have the in-side and temper of Brutes. But it is not the only calamity of serving the Devil, that a Man must debase his nature to the vilest condition, in compliance with his commands; for there is this farther instance of the severity of that *Egyptian* Task-master, that he puts those that are under his power, to *make brick without straw*, I mean, (God in just judgment permitting it so to be) the Devil drives so furiously towards man's destruction, that he will ordinarily prompt and hurry them on in sin beyond their interests; nay their very vicious inclination, and even the capacity of their circumstances and constitution. As if he designed that they should not only *treasure up wrath against the day of wrath*, but be miserably wrackt and tortured here, and *tormented before their time*.

We count the Water-rack a very severe torture, to have that Element forced down a man's throat, till all the vessels of his Body are stretched and tympanized; so that instead of Air he draws in Water with his breath ready to stifle him. And yet this torture we see the drunkard submit himself to at the Devil's command.

It is very dreadfull to have our limbs and nerves distended by pullies and such other engines. And the lascivious man is sensible of something like this, when

when he forces nature to comply with his vicious phancy, and a prevalent temptation. When in some kind of executions they poured scalding lead down the throat of the malefactor, *which the Jews called the burning of the Soul*; it was doubtless very terrible: but he that suffers revenge to fry in his bosome and eat out his very heart and bowels, undergoes something not very much inferior.

To say no more, what more horrid torments can any Tyrant invent or inflict, or what more abominable ignominy can his malice expose any man to, than the usual effects of sensuality do either execute upon a man's person, or stigmatize his name withall? We see in the course of nature the several parts of the Universe give place to the interest of the whole; or, as we commonly speak, private nature gives place to publick, as the water ascends to prevent vacuity, &c. But in this little world, man, when the Devil hath got interest in him, publick nature, humanity it self is violenced for the lust of a private person, of which the Apostle gives us too sad an instance in the debauched Heathen, *Rom. i. 26, 27.* which passage I have no mind to explain.

This is the condition of the Devil's service, in respect of which, the difficultiest parts of God's service are easie and voluptuous. I'll conclude this particular, and sum up what hath been hitherto said in the words of *Chrysologus*: Behold (saith he) the sad Catastrophe of rash and incogitant voluptuousness, it turns him out into a strange Country that might have lived happy in his Father's house; makes a beggar of one that was rich, changes the condi-

Ecce quid faciat præcepti cupiditas, civem in peregrinum, locupletem in egenum, filium in mercenarium convertit, puerum quem à patre piissimo separavit, ut serviret carnoso pœori, qui pietati sanctæ parere contempserit.

on of a Son into that of a Slave, compells him to feed nasty Swine, who declined the service of a gracious Father. But this is not the full end of the sinners Tragedy. For,

Plin. Nat.
hist. l. 15.
c. 24.

6. The Prodigal's fare is as coarse as his employment was sordid, *he is forc'd to feed upon husks*: some take the word in the Original to signifie Bran, according to that of the Poet, — *vivis filiquis & pane secundo*. But the word *negnor*, properly signifies the seed of the tree *Ceronia* or *Charob*, which afforded a coarse fare, which extream necessity sometimes drove men to be content withall. But let us see the moral of it; *Origen* understands by husks the delights of wanton Poetry, with which the Devil usually feeds and entertains loose persons, making them both fit and willing to his service. I remember somewhere to have read, (and I think it is in *Clemens of Alexandria*) that it was his opinion, that *Pagan Philosophy* was hereby meant, which being but the *exterior Cortex* or Husk of true knowledge, served notwithstanding to amuse and busie the Gentile World. But I think our Saviour meant nothing else hereby, than to represent to us the pitifull entertainment, the emptiness and unsatisfactoriness of all the Incomes of sin. That all the gratifications by which the Devil allures men into the basest drudgery, prove upon trial the Apples of *Sodom*, perform nothing of what they promise. *Solomon* hath told us, that an *whorish woman* will bring a man to a morsel of bread; and it is true, in proportion, of all the instances of riot and luxury, which is so much the more severe calamity to such kind of persons, because they usually in their prosperity caressing themselves at the highest rate imaginable, pampering themselves and their
lusts

lusts together, must needs feel the change from one extrem to the other to be exceeding sharp and painfull. But let us see this a little more particularly, in order to which the Apostle S. *John* hath summed up all the returns of sin in these words, 1 John 2. 16. *The things that are in the world are the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life*; or in other words, bodily pleasure, worldly profit, and vain glory. And all these when duly considered, will prove but Husks, such as our voluptuous Prodigal, now the Devil's Vassal, is constrained to feed upon.

First, for bodily pleasure, that is notoriously the entertainment of beasts, rather than of men. For it is they that have the quickest sense and relish of it; man is ashamed of himself when he yields to it, and therefore seeks recesses and the dark, as being aware that he condescends below himself when he stoops to it; therefore certainly God intended it as fodder for beasts, not food for men. Sawce is the most that it can be allowed to be, and he is not to be reckoned a man that can content himself with it, or live as if he were made for it. For besides, that all wise men who have tryed it, pronounce it to be but chaff and vanity, even those who are so silly as to pursue it with the greatest eagerness and appetite, finding themselves empty and disappointed, are constrained to hunt after variety, and to weary themselves in going from one pleasure to another, in hopes to find that satisfaction which is never there to be had. Bodily pleasure is fitly represented by the Stories we have of the Feasts and Junkettings of Witches and Fiends; in which, after great appearance of delicacies, wherewithall the Guests seem to satiate themselves, they notwithstanding find themselves

*P. Cicero-
nem de se-
nestate.*

as empty as before the Banquet. The mind of man is of another make, and of a greater capacity than to be filled with such trash. It is only intellectual pleasure, the contents of wisdom, the peace of a good Conscience, the reflections upon having done some good, which are the repast of a man, and these are solid and lasting; there is more true and manly delight in any one such instance, than in all the caresses of the Epicure.

And then for Profit, it is very inconsiderable gain that is brought in by sin, if accounts be justly cast up. For all those sins which have either any gusto of pleasure, or air of credit attending them, are usually costly and expensive; and for those profitable sins of injustice, covetousness, oppression, &c. they are usually incumbered with so much anxiety, followed with such guilt, branded with so much reproach, that there needs a new Arithmetick to be devised to make out the profit of them. Above all, if we consider that thus to *gain a whole world and to lose a man's Soul*, is the most sad and unfortunate bargain. For it is to possess a great deal for the short lease of life, and then to be turned out of all to all eternity; and whilst he doth possess it, it is so far from satisfying his mind, or appeasing his conscience, as that it cannot allay the Gout, allwage the Tooth-ach, nor cure any disease of the Body. In summ, what is that gain which neither makes the wiser, nor the better, nor the more comfortable man?

But then for glory and fame, these are not usually the attendants of sin, but of some kind of virtues: the portion of sin is shame and infamy, forasmuch as it is an irregularity, a deformity, and in the mildest sense, it is a confession of folly, weakness and impotency. Notwithstanding it is

too true, some sins carry applause with them, but amongst whom? competent Judges of honour, wise and good men? No, but the silly Vulgar, or at least such as have a feeling in the cause, and are partakers in the guilt. But let us see the instances. Some man glories, that in his pot-valour he can drink down whom he pleases, no man can stand before him, and upon this he swaggers as a mighty Champion, whereas in truth he is but a great Hoghead or a nasty Sink through which a great deal of good liquor runs, and his only ability is, that he changes and corrupts it in the passage. Another vaunts his courage and daring, he'll lay down his life upon the least provocation. But shall we think that Man is conscious to himself of any worth, that will stake his life down for every trifle? is he worthy of his life that despises it? is he either wise or just that will cast that away in a frolick or a rage, which is owing to the service of his Prince and Country? O but the great Heroes of the World, that ransack kingdoms, and set up the monuments of their victories in every place! These are they that fools indeed flatter, because they fear them. Nevertheless, whilst these live in all their greatness, they cannot avoid the horrible curses and imprecations of those they have made fatherless or childless: and these usually have that effect upon them, that they seldom descend without blood to their Graves.

Ad generum Cereris sine viete & sanguine pauci.

Descendunt Reges & sicca morte Tyranni.

And when they are gone, their memory is blasted in the Annals of time, and their great achievements reputed *magna latrocinia*. But take

worldly honour at the best that can be made of it, it is but a blast, a bubble, there is nothing of solidity in it, nothing that can really satisfie the mind of a Man; this is the thin and pitifull diet the Devil feeds his slaves with; all those therefore that dote upon pleasure, or riches, or glory, feed upon husks with the Prodigal.

7. But that's not the worst of his condition yet, if the Prodigal could have had husks enough, he would have thought his condition not intolerable as the case stood, but saith the Text, *he desired to fill his belly with the husks, but no man gave unto him.* And now his condition is sad indeed. He that formerly loathed delicacies, now to come to want necessaries; he that surfeited upon viands, now to starve for want of husks; this breaks his heart. And in this the Emblem of a sinner is still carried on: all those husks of pleasure, and gain, and applause, are a course fare for a Man that hath an immortal Soul. But some could so far forget the dignity of their nature, and contract themselves, that they could be content if they might but have enough of these. If I say Men could always swim in pleasure, flow with riches, and mount aloft in glory, they would think the wages of sin well paid; but the time will come when these will be denied them too. As for bodily pleasure, that quickly grows out of date, and we soon lose the relish of such things as were formerly most gratefull in this kind; the most delicious viands are nothing to him that hath no palate, and the most ravishing musick to him that hath no ear; and what do all the charms of beauty signifie to a languid Body and effete Nature? The time comes on apace upon every Man when he shall say with old Barzillai, 2 Sam. 19. 35. *Can*

I taste

*I taste what I eat or drink ? or can I hear any more the voice of singing men or singing women ? Or as Solomon elegantly describes the case, Eccles. 12. 2, 3, 4, 5, &c. When the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out at the windows be darkened, &c. When a Man shall have his winding-sheet in his eye, and his last knell in his ear ; when with great difficulty and continual labour at the pump of life, he hardly keeps his Leaky Vessel from sinking ; what then do all the objects of the Senses gratify him, when the senses themselves are now shutting in their windows, and bidding everlasting good night ? Then those entertainments become not only dull and flat, but irksome and tormenting, and only serve to upbraid his impotency. For when a Man shall say with *Sampson*, I will rouse my self as at other times, alas *Dalilah* hath shaven his locks, betrayed his strength, and bound him down to a state of inactivity. And which is further considerable, the more a Man hath indulged himself the full enjoyment of these things in his youth, the more he accelerates these infirmities and loathings of age, and far the sooner loses all gust of them. And then like *Tantalus*, he is tormented with the sight of what he cannot reach, for he feels himself sinking and perishing.*

Then for the Riches and gain of the World, though it be commonly observed that Men are so ridiculous as to be most earnest in making provision for their voyage, when they are almost at their journeys end, most carking and reaching after the World, when they have least concern in it ; yet *this their way is their folly*, and in a little time it will be said, *Thou fool this night shall thy soul*

soul be taken from thee : His beloved bags must be left behind to he knows not who ; his possession have a new owner, his beautifull habitation another inhabitant, whilest he that gathered all these is close prisoner in the grave, and hath not so much as the beholding them with his eyes. But besides, what do these things advantage him in the mean time ? can they prolong the term of life, or bribe and flave off death ? can they support his Spirit, or comfort his mind ? nay they are so far from that, that it's well if they call not to his remembrance the unjust ways by which he heaped them together ; or if that sad circumstance be escaped, they are but monuments of his folly, that set his heart on those things that will be sure to desert him in his need : and in fine, which serve only to make him do that unwillingly which must be done in spite of him : that is, instead of securing him from death, or preparing him for it, or fortifying him under it, they do in every respect the quite contrary ; his riches perish, and he perishes with them, and it may be by them.

Lastly, for that gawd of fame and worldly glory, it is of so thin a contexture, that it is disputable whether it have any substance at all or no ; or any being otherwise than in phancy and conceit. But to be sure it is far too slight to last long, and too airy to give any satisfaction to a languishing Spirit or a dying Man. When a Man's mind comes to be serious, to retreat into it self, to feel remorse for former follies, what will it avail him that he hath a name amongst men, that he hath carried it fairly, and raised a reputation with those that see not into the inside of things ? that he hath appeared bravely upon the Stage, but is stripped of all behind the Curtain ; is taunted and condemned by his

his own Conscience, and by God who is greater than his Conscience, and knows all things. It is not all the plumes of Fame, together with popular breath, can lift a man up when his own weight sinks him, and his guilt casts him down. Especially when death approaches, how ridiculous will it be to go about to comfort a man's self with report when he is going into the land of forgetfulness? A good name indeed for brave and virtuous actions, embalms a man's memory to all ages; but *the name of the wicked shall rot*, in despite of all the spicery of Flatterers and Parasites. What is there in being talked of, when I shall be no more seen? what to be mentioned in History, unless my name be written in the Book of Life? *Tully* somewhere disputes with himself, *Longam an latam famam mallet? Whether was most desirable, a spreading or a lasting name?* whether to be talked of in many Countries, or to be remembered to many ages? But the matter is not great which of the two, nor will both of them joyned together be of any moment, if a man either cease to be, or be in such a condition that it had been good for him never to have been. For *Notus nimium omnibus qui ignotus moritus sibi*, He that hath not made it his care so to know himself as to secure himself of a blessed immortality, it will be little comfort or antidote against death that he shall be talked of far and near when he is gone. So that upon the whole matter in these things consist all the maintenance and encouragement the Devil can give his Servants, and these being so mean and slight in themselves, and failing men too at last, they have a most uncomfortable bondage that give up themselves to his service.

C H A P. V.

The Habitual Sinner's case stated, or a reflection upon what hath been said in the foregoing Chapter.

The CONTENTS.

- §. I. *The import of the phrase [when he came to himself] shews, that the Prodigal was all this while hitherto not well in his wits, and that the habitual sinner is in a like condition.*
- §. II. *The truth of which appears by considering either the most usual causes, or effects of distraction.*
- §. III. *Objections against this inference answered.*
- §. IV. *The application and conclusion of this first Part of the Parable.*

Verf. 17.

And when he came to himself he said, &c.

WE have in the foregoing Chapter traced the Prodigal from the freedom and felicities of his Father's house, to the extremity of misery and servitude which his extravagant humor cast him into: and in him, and the issues of his way, we have seen the beginnings, the progress, and the result of a sinfull course lively represented. Now summing up all together, and reflecting upon what hath been said, it is evident that the person here described, especially if he resolve to continue in this condition, cannot be in his right wits. The truth of which all men that seriously consider the premises cannot

fancy gets the ascendent, and *Phaeton*-like, drives on furiously and inconsistently. This combustion of the spirits happens sometimes by over-great intention of the mind in long and constant study, sometimes by a fever which inflaming the blood, that communicates the *incendium* to the spirits which take their original from it. But most usually by the rage and violence of some of the passions, (whether irascible or concupiscible, as they are wont to be distinguished) a man setting his heart vehemently upon some object or other, the spirits are set on fire by the violence of their own motion; and in that rage are not to be governed by reason. This we have sad examples of, in Love, in Grief, in Jealousies, in Wrath and Vexation; and indeed, *Bethlehem* is filled with the instances. And this account fits but too well the case we have in hand, namely, of the wilfull and habitual sinner. He having passionately addicted himself to some one or other of those worldly objects we lately spoke of, all his spirits are engaged in the pursuit of it, and with that heat and vehemency that nothing can stop their carriage, nor bring them under the reins of reason. No considerations of God, or a World to come, can come into play, no checks of Conscience are attended to, whatsoever comes on't, the passion must be obeyed, lust must have its full swing, be the danger or consequence of it what it will.

Then for the usual *symptoms* of distraction, if we see a man that hath unspeakable danger over his head, insomuch that every man that sees him bewails and pities him, but he pities not himself; if we see him disporting upon the brink of a precipice, and the ground breaking away under him; nay, if we shall see him court danger, tear his own flesh,
and

and delight in his own mischief: or again, suppose we observe a man to have rich offers made him, but he despises them, and prefers trifles before them; or to be most fierce and injurious to those who are most earnest to do him good, do we not account these the tokens of distraction? And is not the case the very same, when a man shall be found to go on in a course of sin that God and his own Conscience have denounced damnation to, and be secure when there is nothing between him and utter destruction but the frail thred of life, the most uncertain thing in the world; when a man shall in fondness to some sin other, despise the counsels of God's word, slight his promises, laugh at his threatnings, and even defie the Almighty; when he shall express so much hate and indignation against none, as those that reprove his folly, advise him for his good, and forewarn him of his danger; in short, that is every moment ready to drop into hell, and yet goes on carelessly and jollily, is not this laughter of his, *Risus Sardonius*, i. e. plainly notoriously phrenetical in the highest degree? We read, *Acts* 26. 25. that *Festus* was of opinion that much study had made *S. Paul* mad, when he took notice of such a wonderfull zeal in him for Christianity, that no difficulties would abate his edge, no allurements or flatteries withdraw him, no menaces affright him, nor no sufferings prevail at all upon him. But *S. Paul* sufficiently clears himself of that suspicion, giving a just and manly account of his perswasion, and the reasons of his resolution. And withall, *vers.* 11. he confesses time was when he was mad indeed, when he was hurried by his own passions and prejudices to make all the opposition he was able against Christianity, *Παρανομῶς ἐκπαρρησάμην* (saith he) I was exceedingly mad and outrageous

ragious against it. But there were a great many allowances to be made in his case, he had been bred a Pharisee, the education in which Sect had put him under the greatest prejudices against Christianity that could be possibly; the Gospel was a new thing in the World, which character was enough to condemn it; but besides, it lay open to a great many disadvantages, which it is unreasonable here to mention, by reason of all which he thought he should do God good service to oppose it: he therefore only obeyed his erring Conscience, followed the best reason he then had, and what he did amiss he did it ignorantly, and accordingly God had mercy on him. But what can be pretended on the behalf of the habitual sinner against the common law of reason and morality? can he plead ignorance, or pretend Conscience? is morality a new opinion, or was debauchery ever espoused for the *Dogma* of any famous Sect? was it ever a disputable point whether injustice, adultery, and other sensuality, were vices or vertues? did ever any man think he should do God good service by complying with these? nay, is it not evident, that the men we speak of contradict the very principles of reason, the intimations of their own Consciences? they violate all the laws of wisdom, go cross to all rules of prudence: nay, their very interests, and the principles of self-preservation. May we not therefore direct our discourse to such men, as *Herod* is said to have done a Letter to *Cassius*, *Ἡρώδης Κάσιον ἰμάνειν*, in short, *Cassius thou art mad*?

But let us come to particulars, and we will begin with injustice: hath not God said, *that the unrighteous shall have no inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ or of God*? and have we not seen the experiment of those that have raked and torn for riches

as if that were the only thing valuable and desirable, and counted all clear gain that could be gotten, who yet when death hath summoned them to the righteous Tribunal of God, would gladly have refunded all again, and have chosen to have lived the poorest life in the world, so they might have gone out of it with a good Conscience? Is there not just reason to expect that all unjust acquisitions will one day prove like a barbed Arrow in a man's flesh, that must either be pluckt back again; (and that not to be done without horrible pain and anguish,) or else will destroy him eternally? Are not these courses condemned by Heathens, and by all the reason of Mankind? doth not such a man make himself the hate and scorn of others, and a shame to himself? What is there then prevails with any man to continue such a practice? is there any necessity presses him to it? must a man be starved else? is there any such unspeakable felicity in being rich, that the temptations thereof are irresistible? doth any man live more comfortably by his ill-gotten goods? nay in truth, these imbitter the delights of all the rest. Doth riches afford a man such security, quiet and repose, that no man can be at ease till he have attained it; or is it not certain on the contrary, that the solicitude of acquiring it macerates a man with cares and projects night and day; and when he hath attained his ends, he lies at once under the joint inconveniences of abundance and of poverty; the cares of the one, and the burden of the other? Wherefore upon the whole matter there is nothing in the case but the impetuosity of a greedy grasping humour, that bears down his reason, fools him and destroys him. And if a milder name than madness be due to this condition, let sober men judge;

Now take the Voluptuous man to whom no fruit is pleasant but that which is forbidden, and who knows no measure of pleasure but a surfeit; in the first place it is very doubtfull whether the quest of pleasures be not as troublesome as the enjoyments of them are sweet; at least if we lay together the tedious expectations, the frequent frustrations, the certain expence of time, fortune and health, the secret guilt, the constant fear of detection, the shame and reproach upon discovery, the pressing importunities of passion before enjoyment, the follies and dangers in the midst, and the irksomness and loathing after their gratification: the little time of pleasure, and the long hours of shame and repentance, the dull relish of the bodily Senses, to the quick and pungent sense of the Mind and Conscience; we shall be put out of doubt and assured of the unreasonableness of such a course. But if we consider withall the severe denunciations of the Almighty, the inconsistency of such a course with any interest in the joys of another life, the no compare between a fool's paradise of sensuality and the felicities of the Kingdom of Heaven, we cannot pronounce of such a Man as (notwithstanding all these considerations) shall give himself up to these brutish passions, otherwise than that he hath forfeited his reason, foregoing his greatest interest for the veriest trifle, and selling his birth-right for a mess of pottage.

The like may be said of Drunkenness; To see a man tunn up himself like a barrel, and fill his head with froth, which his tongue discharges again; to see a Man's face deformed, his eyes staring, his feet faltering, his motions antick, his thoughts open and indecent, his speech much, and reason little:

And

And herewith to observe his estate poured down a common sewer, and his credit and reputation utterly ruined; but above all, his Soul indangered to come into everlasting burnings, and all this for the love of drink: who can chuse but in his thoughts score up such a man as fit for *Bethlehem?*

Let us take only one instance more, and that shall be in that passion which hath gotten the name from all the rest, I mean Anger. Every man knoweth that health is best preserved by calmness and evenness of mind, that Men's interest is best secured by gentleness and an obliging temper, their safety by cession and placableness, that reason is highest when rage is down; that business is best carried on by the most sedate prosecution; inso-much that no men count him wise whom they observe to be violent, nor do they think those to be valiant that they see huff and swagger. Besides, passion disguises a Man's very countenance, dries up his Body, brings wrinkles upon his Face, gray hairs upon his head, hollowness of eyes, withers and destroys him: It puts him upon the most foolish, shamefull, and dangerous adventures, which at the same time it usually renders him impotent to effect, or if he effect them, he only makes matter for his own repentance as long as he lives; or it may be work for the Executioner to shorten his unhappy days. Above all, it is contrary to the nature of God who is a God of peace, to the temper of the blessed *Jesus*, who was an example of meekness and patience; it utterly unsits a Man for the peacefull and amicable society of Saints and Angels in the Kingdom of Heaven, and disposes him for the horrid fellowship of fell and despe-

desperate Fiends in the regions below. All which things considered, when we see a Man boil with choler, foam with rage, pale with envy, and indulging himself in this humour; what can we say or think of this man, but that he hath lost the *τὸ ἀνθρωπίνον*, the very principles of manhood?

But perhaps it may be said, that all this while we have but maintained a Stoical Paradox; and for all this that hath been said, vicious men cannot be reputed mad, because upon other occasions we see many of them give proof of wit and parts. To which I answer, that neither do I in all this intend to intimate, that they are in all respects mad, (though it were well for many of them that it were strictly true.) But when men shall betray the most egregious folly, and act the most extravagantly in the matters of greatest moment, I may leave it to themselves in their sober moods to judge what name they ought to be called by, whatever ingenie they may discover in lesser occasions. Besides, neither is it the condition of all those that are acknowledged mad, to do nothing soberly or ingeniously; all or most have their Lucid intervals, and there are some in whom the humour betrays it self in some peculiar instances only. *Melancholici quoad hoc*, (as they say.) Talk with them in the general and they are like other Men, but touch upon some peculiar point and they rave presently. So it is with these Men we speak of: As to common conversation and the affairs of the world they may be ingenious, and perhaps in some repartee, or other trifle, (by reason of the heat of their Spirits aforesaid) beyond other men; but as to the business of their Souls and Eternity, they have no manly sense at all. And indeed, there is

nothing can be more pat to verify what I have been saying than this very circumstance; for when men that otherwise have sense and understanding in lesser matters shall be so extremely absurd in that which especially requires the most manly proceedings, it is the very Symptom that we have been all this while describing.

Which being so, the consequence is, that in the first place it is an absurdity next to theirs to follow the counsel or example of such men. The Psalmist makes it the first step to felicity, not to stand in the counsel of the ungodly. Will any man think it reasonable to imitate the mad freaks of a Bedlam, because he sees him jolly and brisk when he plays them? no more let any man encourage himself in wickedness, because he sees the high rants of sinners: rather let him say in the words of our Saviour, *Father forgive them, they know not what they do.* Fools they are with a witness that make a mock of sin; little do they think how ill this jollity becomes them, and less do they forethink what will be the end of such courses.

Nor let the authority of the number or quality of such persons bear us down, for folly is folly, let who will be the Patron of it. Can precedent change the nature of things? is there any prescription against reason? will publick vogue justify Conscience, or multitude of voices carry it against God? unless wicked men could not only efface the principles of their own minds and consciences, but also remove the Pillars of the World, change the course of nature, and by a Gygantick enterprise wage war against and conquer Heaven; i.e. force the Almighty to alter his opinion, repeal his laws, and revoke his threatnings: sin will

everlastingly be folly; and perseverance therein madness, in spite of multitude, fashion, custom and example. Shall I therefore follow their examples that thwart God, that contradict their own Consciences, whom all men at least tacitly condemn, even those that brutishly and sillily are led by them? Shall I make those my guide who have so little foresight as not to see beyond the short stage of life? Shall I make them my Counsellors that make so foolish a bargain, as to give eternal life in exchange for momentary pleasure? that have so bad memories as to forget they have immortal Souls, or so little reason as to think there is no God? In a word, shall I take them for wise men that have so little of man in them as to live like beasts, and to wish they might die so too? Or (which equals any of the former) that can be so sottish as to imagine they can go on in a course of rebellion against God, and escape eternal destruction?

Again Secondly, upon the premises it is mighty reasonable, that every man in this condition should in his Lucid intervals apply himself most effectually to the means of recovery. 'Tis not the custome of Physicians to administer remedies in a Paroxysm, (but such as may abate the symptoms only) because nature is then perverted and out of order to comply with the help offered to it; and it were madness little inferiour to that of these Spiritual Lunatics we speak of, to deal with them in the heat and rage of their passion, as to reprove a man when he is drunk, to preach meekness to a man in a fury, &c. all we can do then is to pity and pray for them. But when the fit is over and the patient in a sedate temper, then is the

the time for application; and it is the greatest uncharitableness in the world not to help them what we can, or to forbear to admonish them as the Angel did *Lot* when he had drawn him out of *Sodom*, *Escape for thy life, look not back, &c.* But especially when the sinner is in his right mind, apprehensive of his former folly, sees the emptiness of what he so eagerly pursued, nauseates his own choice, and either feels or foresees the consequence of it; Then is the only time for him to call in his thoughts, to deplore his unreasonableness, to shame himself and feel remorse for his wickedness, to take a just measure of things, to renew his vows, to fortify his resolutions, to beg God's grace, and to lay all the obligations possible upon himself, to withstand all the occasions of relapsing. To which purpose let him consider with himself, "It was God's unspeakable patience and mercy to me, that I was not snatcht away in the midst of my riot and debauch. I that abused so much goodness, broke so righteous a Law, and affronted so great a Majesty, it had been just with God to have cut off the thred of my life and let me drop into Hell. Oh what absurd folly possessed me, that I dust and ashes should oppose my Maker! I that could not assure my self of one moments life, should yet live so as I durst not die, or if I did, must expect to have been damned eternally! Or what if God sparing my life had given me up to a reprobate mind, to a prophane spirit, had never solicited me by his Spirit, nor awakened my Conscience more, but had said, *Let him that is unjust be unjust still, and him that is filthy be filthy still, &c.* and so I had gone blind-fold to destruction? Blessed be

" his holy name, and happy is it for my poor
 " Soul that I have lived to see my shame, feel my
 " disease, and bewail my folly. O my Soul *sin no*
 " *more, lest a worse thing happen to thee.*

And this brings me to the Second Part of the
 Parable, (*viz.*) The Prodigal's return.

specifically what the Father's love is, and how it is
 apprehensive of his former fall, and how it is
 of what he is ready to do, and how it is
 choice, and either leads or forces the prodigal
 of it: Then is the only time for him to call in
 his thoughts to behold his unrepentant
 shame himself, and feel remorse for his wickedness
 to take a just measure of things, to renew his heart,
 to fortify his resolutions, to be God's grace, and
 to lay all the obligations possible upon himself, to
return to his Father's house. To what
 purpose let him consider with himself, " It was
 " God's unsearchable patience and mercy to me
 " that I was not brought away in the night of my
 " riot and debauch. I that should be wretched
 " and broke to righteous I was, and delivered
 " to great a Majesty, it had been just with God
 " to have cut off the thread of my life and let me
 " drop into Hell. Oh what should folly have cost
 " me that I dash and slip should oppose my
 " moments, that I should not have my last of one
 " die, or if I did, must expect to have been
 " not eternally. Let what it cost turning me
 " had given me up to a reprobate mind, and a
 " phant spirit, had never followed me by his
 " it not awakened my Conscience more, but
 " had bid let him that is wiser be wiser, and
 " and him that is better be better, &c. and let
 " had gone blind-fold to destruction. What is
 " his

THE
Penitent Pardoned:
 OR, A
 DISCOURSE
 OF THE
 NATURE of SIN,
 AND THE
 EFFICACY of REPENTANCE,
 Under the
Parable of the Prodigal Son.

PART II.

The Penitent, or the Prodigal returning.

S. Luke 15. Verſ. 17, 18, 19, 20, 21.

And when he came to himſelf, he ſaid, How many hired Servants of my Father's have bread enough and to ſpare, and I periſh with hunger.

*I will ariſe and go to my Father, and will ſay un-
 to him, Father, I have ſinned againſt Heaven and be-
 fore thee,*

And

And am no more worthy to be called thy Son: make me as one of thy hired-Servants.

And he arose, and came to his Father. But when he was yet a great way off, his Father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

And the Son said to him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son.

CH A P. I.

Of Consideration.

T H E C O N T E N T S.

- §. I. *The general concern of Repentance. The reason why, notwithstanding, there is little mention made of it in the Law of Moses. The peculiar necessity of it to those who have been great sinners: the parts thereof as they are alluded to in this Parable.*
- §. II. *Of the nature of Consideration; and that it usually begins conversion.*
- §. III. *Affliction usually brings men to Consideration, prosperity commonly rendering them either light and incogitant, or confident and presumptuous.*
- §. IV. *The peculiar meditations of a returning sinner.*

Hitherto in the former part of the Parable, in the person of a light incogitant young-man, we have seen the deplorable effects of rashness and folly, pride and curiosity, insolence and disobedience, how they work jointly and severally, together and by turns, till by degrees they have trained him on to his utter ruine. His pride raises him so high that he must fall, his licentiousness betrays him

him to slavery, and his luxury to extream necessity. And under this Type we have seen lively portrayed the beginnings, the progress, the upshot, the causes and the effects of a sinfull course.

It was high time for the Prodigal to think of returning to his Father, when he was perishing by his disobedience, and had no other refuge but in his Father's clemency; and sure it is time for the sinner to repent and return to God, when (if he be sensible of any thing) he cannot but be apprehensive that in the course he is in, the danger of his eternal ruine is as certainly impendent as it is more intolerable.

And thus far we have sadly observed the steps of descent towards Hell: we come now in this Second Part to descry the way of recovery, to trace out a plain path towards Heaven: that is, to lay open the beginnings, the motives, the whole nature and process of repentance. And the divine wisdom of our Saviour hath so contrived this Parable, that all the lines of this great work are as plainly discernable in the narrative of the Prodigal's return, as we have already seen the progress of sin delineated in his former extravagancy. Wherefore as I cannot but hope that the genuine efficacy of plain truth, especially invigorated by so curious a scheme, as in the former part of our Saviour's discourse, must needs have put every man into some concern, who hath stained his Conscience with guilt, but not quite extinguished it: So I see less cause to doubt but that this Second Part will be very acceptable and usefull to all those upon whom the former made any impression. For if he that could pretend to be able to direct those who have bankrupt their fortunes, how they might certainly repair their losses, and redintegrate their estates,

estates, should be sure to have a great many attentive Auditors; and he that should undertake the cure of those that have received a Sentence of death within themselves, and have been given up as no longer men of this world, would be sure to have good store of Patients: there is far greater reason to expect that such a discourse as pretends to give relief to guilty Consciences, to open a sure port for all troubled Souls, should find acceptance with all such as are not in the very extremity of one of those fits of madness we lately spoke of.

*Cum ipse
omnium
notarum
sine pecca-
tor & nul-
li rei na-
tus nisi pa-
nitentia,
non facile
possum su-
per illa ta-
cere, quam
ipse quoq;
& stirpis
humana,
& offensa
in domi-
num prin-
ceps Adam
exomologesi restitutus in Paradisum suum non vocet.*

Tertullian writing a discourse of the nature and efficacy of repentance, gives this serious account of so doing in the latter end of the Treatise. *Being conscious (saith he) to my self that I am a great sinner, I cannot easily be silent concerning repentance, especially since it is preached and recommended to all posterity by our first Parent Adam, as that which he found by experience to have been the only expedient of restoring him again to Paradise, after he had sinned against God.* And not only our first Parents but all their Off-spring have been sensible of the necessity of repentance, forasmuch as all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, and if God should be extreme to mark what is done amiss, no man living could be justified.

Repentance is (as the same Author calls it,) the *Pharos* or Watch-tower, which gives light by night to those who are bewildred by their own vanity and the illusion of the Devil, and are ready to sink of their own leaks. 'Tis the great *Ashum* and Sanctuary of humane infirmity, the Port of a troubled Soul, a Plank to a ship-wrackt Conscience, a Sovereign Plaster to the Sore and Wounded, Physick

Physick to the Sick, nay, life from the dead, and resurrection from the Grave. Repentance is the miracle of divine goodness, the reconciler of the divine Attributes, Justice and Mercy, the relief and succour of humane frailty, the envy of Devils as that which they cannot attain to, and the peculiar and inestimable privilege of mankind, that which their amendment, comfort and eternal salvation depends upon.

Therefore it may justly seem a wonder that the Law of *Moses* takes little or no notice of it, but the reason is, because the Mosaical institution at least in the letter of it was never intended as the method of attaining eternal life, but principally as a Political Law, and accordingly it takes notice only of matter of fact, allows no retrieval, but faith, *Cursed is he that continues not in all things that are written in the book of the Law to do them.* But the Prophets all along earnestly recommend repentance; with this both our Saviour and *S. John Baptist* began their Preaching, and indeed, this is the summ of the whole Gospel, That God will wink at the times of former ignorance, and now commands all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, &c. *Act. 17. 30, 31.*

It is true, (as we have intimated already) all have not the same necessity of repentance, or at least not of the same measures and circumstances, because all have not run the same risk of folly, nor blackned their Souls with the same enormous commissions that some others have, and therefore cannot have such bitter reflections for which they have given no cause, nor can find such difficulty of recovering themselves, having never been habituated to a course of sin, and therefore as our Saviour said,

said, *He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance*; so we intend not this discourse principally for such persons: but for those that have run a long course of notorious sin, that have provoked God, offended their Conscience, deformed their natures, and put themselves under just and dreadful apprehensions of a sad account hereafter; it is the infinite concern of such men, if they do not desperately abandon themselves to eternal misery, to attend to this happy expedient which now I am to explain.

To come therefore to the business. Our Saviour in the part of the Parable before us, represents the Prodigal making his retreat in this order.

1. He becomes a thinking and considerative person, and debates his own case with himself. *When he came to himself he said, How many hired Servants of my Father's, &c.* Before he drove on furiously, considering nothing present, reflecting on nothing past, nor regarding any thing that might come after: now he grows cool, reasons the case, and deliberates what is like to be the issue of his present state, and what is fittest to be done for the future. And thus the penitent sinner; the first essay of repentance is a relenting thoughtfulness, a serious and pensive considerateness. As soon as he is gotten out of the noise of the world, the charms of pleasure, and the hurry of his own passions; he sits down and considers, he practises to see with his own eyes, and not be led by rumour and example; he exercises his reason, and resolves to judge impartially of things: and from this point of time the first conceptions of good in him bear date.

2. from the aforesaid deliberation he proceeds to resolution. *I will arise and go to my Father, and say unto him, &c. q. d.* "I foolishly hurried on hitherto,

" hitherto, and was upon the brink of destruc-
 " tion before I apprehended my danger; I dreamed
 " of new discoveries, of fresh pleasures in my bold
 " adventures, but I now perceive there is but one
 " way with me, I must try my Father's clemency
 " or perish. Whether he will receive me or no I
 " cannot tell, but that I find must be the way or
 " none, therefore I will make the experiment: It
 " is better to retract my folly and live, than ob-
 " stinately to maintain my post and die misera-
 " bly; there is some hope this way, and none at
 " all the other: therefore *jacta est alea, I will return.*
 " Thus also the penitent sinner: Now (saith he)
 " mine eyes are opened, and though very late, yet
 " now at last I see my danger, and blessed be God
 " that I see whither I was going, before the case
 " be utterly desperate; I am sure to be damned if
 " I continue my course, whatever come on't there-
 " fore I'll return. Whatsoever discouragements
 " for my acceptance, my former rebellions
 " set before me; or whatsoever difficulty there
 " may be for an old habituate sinner to change
 " his bias, I am resolved however not to perish
 " foolishly with my hands folded up in my bo-
 " some, I will arise, I will try.

3. This resolution is followed by execution and
 actual returning. *So he arose and went to his Fa-
 ther.* He that considers and comes to no resolu-
 tion, is like the man that ploughs his ground but
 sows nothing upon it; and he that resolves, but
 executes not, is yet more sottish, for he is at all
 the cost, and takes all the pains, but reaps no fruit
 of his labours. There is such a near connexion
 between consideration, resolution and execution,
 and they are so naturally consequent upon one ano-
 ther; that as on the one side, consideration brings

on

on resolution, and that practice; so much more on the other, from a Man's practice we may ordinarily pronounce of his resolutions, and from that certainly calculate his meditations. But to the point in hand: "I (saith the Prodigal) have delayed too long already, I may consider and make resolutions, and yet sit and starve; it must be doing must rescue me from my misery. So be arose. And so doth the true Penitent.

But these things are not to be passed over thus superficially, therefore we will handle them particularly. And accordingly,

6. II. I begin with the first, *viz.* Consideration or Deliberation. By which I mean not a mopish and ineffective dozeiness, when Men seem to think profoundly, but apprehend nothing at all distinctly; their understandings being amused and baffled with a new and strange prospect, as if looking back upon their former miscarriages had (with *Lor's Wife*) transformed them into a Pillar of Salt. Much less do I mean a solemn austerity of temper, and rigid fixation of spirits: as if men had forgone all touches of humanity, and were become a kind of walking Ghosts. Both these are passions of the body, not motions of the mind, and if they are not counterfeited, tend more to desperation than conversion; and there is danger lest such men are falling from a vicious phrenzy (as we not long since called it) to a strictly literal, and more incurable madness.

But by Consideration, so far as concerns the business in hand, I understand nothing more nor less, but a manly and a serious application of our minds to take a just and impartial view of our selves, and of all such things as most concern us, to the end
that

that we may govern our determinations and carriage accordingly. For the fuller apprehension of this, we are to remember (what I have in part intimated before) that the mind of Man hath these four privileges.

1. It hath not only a perceptive power of such things as are present, which is common to the inferior and animal faculties, but hath a large sphere of cognizance, recalling things past, and having a solicitude and fore-thought of things to come.

*Hic uno à
bestiis plu-
rimam dif-
ferunt ho-
mines, quod
rationem
habeant à*

*utrumque datum & verum, & veritatem, ceterisque multa
simul agitantibus, & (ut ita dicam) sagacem, quæ & causas rerum, &
consuetudines videt, & similitudines transferat, & disjuncta conjungat,
& cum presentibus futuris copulat, omnemque complexatur vita consequen-
tis statum, &c. Cic. de finib. lib. 1.*

2. The rational powers of the Soul are not merely passive as the inferior are, which only take notice of such Images of things in *transit* and glance, as are reflected upon them from the Senses, but these can fix themselves, and their objects can hold the Images of things steady, and stay and arrest their own motions towards them.

3. The mind of Man doth not take so superficial a view of things, as to discern only the pleasantness or unpleasantness of them, wherein natural good and evil consists, but is able to discern and pronounce of an higher and more exquisite beauty or deformity, excellency or turpitude from the relation to God, to the community, to the nature of our own Souls, and to the time to come; wherein consists that which we call moral good and evil. And this is that rational sense or relish, the *Criterion* or Standard of the Soul I formerly spoke of.

Lastly, the Soul is able also to reflect upon it self, to measure its own motions, and its own state,

by the standard aforesaid; and so becomes aware of, and corrects its own errors for the time past, and takes better aim for the time to come.

Now the exercising of these several capacities of the Soul, is that which we mean by Consideration. Namely, then a Man considers when in the first place he suffers not himself to be carried away with the prejudice of Sense, nor confines his thoughts to such things as are thereby presented to him; but enlarges his prospect, looks round about him, takes one thing with another, and embraces in his mind the whole nature, tendency, and all the circumstances of things. This is well intimated by the *Latines* in either of these words, *Contemplari* and *Considerare*, which seem to allude to Astronomical Calculations, wherein Men ought not *ad pauca respicere*, to confine their observations to some one appearance, but to look round about them, to survey the whole Orb, and save all the *Phænomena*. Thus a Man considers morally that observes his own actions, that recollects what hath befallen himself, or other men upon so doing, and forecasts what may befall him or them hereafter.

Again, when a Man lives not *extempore*, but premeditates, nor suffers himself to be over-born, either by the presence and importunity of sensual objects, or by the solicitation and hurry of passions, but checks his own carriage, and gives himself leisure calmly, and maturely to understand the just nature of things, defixes his thoughts, and suspends his determination till he see plain reason to incline him this way, or that this is a considerative man. Especially when a Man takes not things in the gross, as if all were alike trivial, or alike momentous, nor suffers himself to be led along by common custome, opinion and example; that takes

takes not the price of things from publick fame, but appeals to and estimates all things by the just standard of reason, and accordingly governs his desires and prosecutions: the man, I say, that distinguishes and makes a discrimination betwixt one thing and another, that goes not by tale and number, but by weight and proof; is justly esteemed a thinking and serious person. For so the *Greek* words used in this case import. *Διακρίναι, Διακρίναι*, signifying *to confer, compare, and distinguish*: as also *λογίζεσθαι*, *to state the matter, to cast up accounts*; and so also the *Latin* word *deliberare*, which *Festus* derives from *libra*, as, *deciding the matter by the scale*; in like manner, *examinare, to observe, quâ lance extat, which way the scale turns*.

Lastly, when a man turns his eyes inward, studies himself, makes himself his theam, and comments upon himself and his own actions, hath his eyes in his head, minding his own way, having propounded a destined mark and aim of his actions; keeps it constantly in his eye, and shapes his course accordingly; not like the fool in the Proverbs of Solomon, that hath his eyes roving, and in the ends of the earth. This is that the *Hebrews* express by the phrase *לִבְּךָ לֵבָבְךָ*, *to lay to heart*; or in the other phrase of the Psalmist; *Psal. 4. 4. To commune with ones own heart*. This is that which we mean by considerativeness, or in other words, the working of Conscience, and the discharge of both its offices.

And by such kind of consideration as this doth the grace of God and his holy Spirit begin the work of conversion; and herein do the first strictures and essays of piety discover themselves.

It was wont to be said by the *Platonists*, that knowledge is nothing but remembrance, and that

all the discovery of truth, which we in this state are able with all our labour and diligence to make, is but a revival and recovery of those Ideas of things we had in a former state, and which now became obscure and confused by our being immersed in matter and body. But let that be as it may, it is true in the present case, that the first point of true practical wisdom is gained by studying a man's self, and by making himself the subject of his meditations. For as there is nothing wherein we betray more folly, nothing by which we ship-wreck our Consciences, and lose our selves so fatally, as by permitting our selves to run adrift without Card or Compass, Port or Pilot; so on the other hand, there is nothing gives greater hopes of recovery, than being able and disposed to recollect our selves, to call in our thoughts by serious consideration and reflection. To which purpose it was worthily said by Philo, *That the source of all our danger, and the first reason of our miscarriages, lay in our running on with the boisterous tide of passion; and the first hopes of safety was in being able to stay our selves, and soberly to reason the matter.* But we have greater authority for it than Philo's. For upon defect of this, God himself lays the blame of men's ruine; and in this he places the first signs of recovery. So we find him complaining of his people Israel as in a very desperate condition, Isa. 1. 3. *My people will not consider*; and therefore often calls upon them by the Prophets in these words *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways.* But most emphatically doth he express himself, Isa. 46. 8. *Remember and shew yourselves men: bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors.* And it is very observable, that in that famous Chapter, Ezek. 18. where above any other passage

Παράν τῃ
ἐπὶ αὐτῶν
τιμῶν, ὡς
δύμον, ὡς
γισμὸν ὃ
καὶ ὅς ἐστι
μάτων.

passage in the Old Testament, God most solemnly proclaims and ratifies the efficacy of repentance, he describes the first lines at least of it to consist in consideration, *vers. 14. A Son that considereth, &c.* Again, *vers. 28. Because he considereth and turneth, &c.* To all these add the advice of the Psalmist, *Psal. 4. 4. Stand in awe and sin not; commune with your own hearts upon your bed, and be still.* As if the serious treating with our selves was the only way, both to stifle the temptation to, and to extinguish the guilt of sin. The Septuagint render the last phrase of the Psalmist, *Katavýyon, q. d. consider so seriously with your selves at your best retirements, the evil of your ways, and the danger of your course, that you may feel remorse and compunction.* The Chaldee Targum paraphraseth thus, *Let your hearts concur with your mouths in saying your prayers, and think of the day of death: q. d. Affect your hearts seriously in secret with a deep apprehension of the danger of sin.*

And if we look into the New Testament, nothing can more illustriously set forth this which we are asserting, than those two Parables of our Saviour, *Luke 14. 28, &c.* of the man that intends to build a Tower, and a King going to war. In both which, the design of our Saviour is to shew, that serious debating, and prudent forecasting all the difficulties of the whole course of Christianity, is no less necessary to him that intends successfully to undertake it, than those grave deliberations of Princes, or projections of private persons, when the one intends to enter into a dangerous war, and the other a costly building: and so likewise in the famous Parable of the Sower and Seed, *Matt. 13.* where the good ground that hath depth of Earth, represents those persons that seriously and profoundly consider.

If indeed conversion to God were nothing else but a meer melancholy qualm, or a fright: if I say repentance were only a Paroxysm of devotion, and the Divine Majesty so soft and easie as to be taken with an agony of mind, or a kind of love-fit: then an inconsiderate man might be esteemed a penitent. But repentance being nothing less than the change of a man's whole temper and life, the entering into a whole course of severe and constant vertue, the subduing our most potent passions, the denying our selves some of the most pleasant gratifications of flesh and blood, the breaking off old and radicated customs and habits: It must be absolutely necessary, that whosoever goes through with it, do maturely consider the enterprize, and call in all his force for the atchievement of it.

Γνωμὴ 38
 ex ἀνέ-
 κης αἰ-
 σθητῶν ἀ-
 νθρώπων.
 S. Chrys.
 hoc. prior
 citat.

Or again, if a man could be so vain and unreasonable as to hope that God would save men by force; do violence to their natures, over-bear or supersede their faculties, and plant grace in their hearts by a meer act of his omnipotency, and new make them after the manner he created them at first without their own concurrence, then indeed there would be no use of consideration; and it would be as fruitless and unnecessary to contribute any endeavour, as impossible to make any opposition. But those that dream at this rate, neither (1.) understand God nor themselves; neither what is fit for him to confer, nor for them to expect. (2.) They know not what vertue means, nor (3.) apprehend whence comfort arises. (4.) They consider not what a righteous judgment to come supposes, nor what the very notion of reward and punishment speaks. (5.) They make no difference between free and natural Agents, and condemn themselves to senseless and stupid Machines, in hopes

to be made Saints *per saltum*, and to come at Heaven such a way as never any man did or can do; that is, without their own endeavour.

Or lastly, if a man could persuade himself, that the means of grace, (*viz.*) the Word and Sacraments did use to work physically upon men, and made them good *ex opere operato*, (as some speak) after the manner of food and medicine to the Body, which take place whether Men consider it or no, (and oftentimes work the better the less the mind is employed in thinking of that or any thing else:) upon such a supposition there were no reason why any man should put himself to the trouble of that we have been speaking of. But on the contrary, it is most certain that all the means of grace have effected upon men's Souls, no otherwise than by awakening the sense of the mind, and making men considerative, and then men's hard hearts are made contrite by operating upon themselves, as the Diamond is known to be cut by its own dust. For it is as impossible that Sermons, Counsels, or any other Discourses, should edify the mind of a man, unless his understanding bring them close, and make application of them to his Conscience, by the way of consideration; as it is for a man's Body to be nourished by meats who hath no digestive faculty, or to be cured by medicine, where all the powers of nature are extinguished. In short, to think otherwise, is to turn devotion into conjuring, and all the divine institutions into charms and amulets.

And all this is so true that nothing can be objected to it but what will convince the objector of utter strangeness and unacquaintedness with converting grace; for we may safely appeal either to the experience of every such convert as we are

speaking of, or to the observation of all those who have taken notice of others in that condition, whether any thing hath been more remarkably visible in such a *Crisis*, than a pensive, serious, and considerative temper. And it were easie to bring abundance of egregious instances hereof; such as *Justin Martyr*, *St. Austin*, and others: but to what I have said already, I will only subjoin two or three Scriptural observations. And the first shall be what *David* saith of himself, *Psal.* 119. vers. 59. *I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet to thy precepts.* In the next place I cannot but take notice in the story of *Isaac*, *Gen.* 24. 63. the Scripture saith of him, *He went out into the fields to meditate in the evening.* The *LXX.* render it, he went out *abandoning*, to talk with himself, to entertain discourse with his own heart; and for the convenience of doing this, he chose the solitude of the Fields, and the cool and quiet of the Evening. And by this practice the Holy Ghost characterizes him, as (though a young man, yet) beginning to be both a wife and a pious person. Nor is it to be omitted which is recorded of *Ahab*, *1 Kings* 21. 27. That when God threatened him with the utter extirpation of his family for his wickedness, he put on Sackcloth, sprinkled himself with Ashes, and especially amongst the rest he walked softly: that is, although he did not heartily repent, yet he knew well how to dissemble the doing it, and acted the part of a penitent in that serious and considerative posture. I will conclude this point with a passage of the Prophet *Jeremiah*, Chap. 31. vers. 18, 19. the words are these: *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised; as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Turn thou me and I shall*

shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God. Shortly after I was turned I repeated, and after I was instructed I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. A memorable Scripture very full and apposite to my present purpose, and withall so pathetic as that it is almost match for this Parable of our Saviour we have before us. The reflection upon both which together lead me,

In the second place to observe the occasion, or what it was which put the Prodigal into a considerative temper; and that was the pressure of his wants: whilst wind and tide favoured him, and his affairs were prosperous, he made no reflections, nor struck fall to any thing; but now the tide forsaking him he is becalmed, and then considers. In like manner,

§. III. It is usually some affliction or other which first awakens habitual sinners into consideration, and the rudiments of piety and religion. Or as serious consideration begins conversion, so commonly some sharp affliction or other begins that seriousness. It cannot be doubted but that the most easie and most frequently successfull way of begetting a sense of God and of piety in the minds of Men is by holy education in their youth, whilst their hearts are tender and tractable, not prejudiced by actual engagements, not confirmed by example, not hardened by long cu-

Upon this account it may seem that our Saviour, *Mat. 5. 3. 4.* pronounces the Poor and those that mourn, blessed, because adversities dispose men to consideration, and to repentance; whereas the rich and prosperous have so many temptations to persist in their course, that our Saviour elsewhere pronounces it very hard for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God. And this seems to be meant by the Apostle, *1 Cor. 5. 5.* when he tells the Corinthians they should have delivered the incestuous person up to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his Soul might be saved, &c. intimating that some sharp affliction was the likeliest method of curing such a person.

some

Elisha dis-
courses ad-
mirably
of the se-
veral me-
thods of
the Divine
Grace to
reclaim
sinners,
Job 33.
from v. 14.
to 26.

stone and practice; and when the grace of God anticipates the Devil, and prevents all his enterprises: and perhaps if we look over the state of Mankind, we shall find amongst those that are sincerely good, the number of those that have become so after a long course of sin, to be very small in comparison. We may also allow it for truth which is made a common maxime, that *ingenuous minds* are most wrought upon by obligation and favour, that the strongest efforts are those which are made by kindness and goodness, that this latter method will melt and dissolve such as would be broken in pieces by violence. But this prejudices not the business in hand, for we speak of such as have lost their ingenuity; old hardened sinners, who must first be broken by the hammer of affliction before they will dissolve by the benign warmth of mercy and kindness. These last indeed carry on the work and make a perfect change, but fear and pain usually begins it. But I will not stick to grant that perhaps it may fall out, that some old sinner may have been reclaimed by the reading of a good book, hearing a serious Sermon, or by the grave admonition of a faithful Friend, without any pressing affliction to prepare him for it, or as it were extort it from him. Notwithstanding I verily believe, if an estimate could be taken, the instances of this kind would be found to be exceeding rare. We find *Pharaoh* and *Nebuchadnezzar* humbled by adversity, and their stiff Necks submitted to those acknowledgments of God's power and sovereignty, which no kindness or mercy would bring them to. And *Manasses* comes out a true convert, a new man out of the furnace of affliction. And *David* himself confesses of himself, *That before he was afflicted he went astray, but thereby he had learnt to keep*

keep God's Commandments, Psal. 119. vers. 67. But the whole Scripture affords no one instance that I know of, of such a person as we speak of, cured by any other method than this. And for the whole Nation of the Jews God himself saith thus, Hos. 5. 15. *I will go and return to my place till they acknowledge their transgression and seek my face. In their affliction they will seek me early: q. d.* "I will not only afflict my people, but I will leave them under the pressure thereof; and by this rack as it were extort from them a confession of my sovereignty and their own guilt: for I have found by long trial that nothing else will work upon a stiff-necked generation, but in their affliction I am sure they will earnestly and instantly seek after me.

It was not the peculiar jealousie of *Fabius* concerning the Roman State which made him say, *Se secunda magis quam adversa timere*, That their danger was greater lest they should become rash and confident by some slight successes, than that their spirits should be broken by disaster. For all men that understand themselves, and value their safety above their pleasure, find they have reason more to suspect the soft charms of ease, peace and plenty, than the rough attacks of adversity. Because amongst other things, a constant and stiff gale of prosperity carries men with too full sail to be checkt or controuled by counsel: it presents them with too many and great temptations to be easily resisted, ministers to their confident presumption, that either they are good enough already, because they have so many arguments of the divine favour, or at least that he overlooks their miscarriages. And Conscience is either out-faced, or hath been so often silenced and baffled, that it dares scarce mutter till the apprehension

prehension of some great danger or misery authorize and provoke it : but then it recovers its speech and tells its errand.

To this purpose we have a famous instance in the Brethren of *Joseph*, *Gen. 37*. They (prompted by envy) had maliciously plotted the death, or at least the perpetual servitude of their Brother ; and proceeded so far in it, that to their thinking it had taken effect. Then they unworthily contrive to abuse the affections of their good old Father, with feigned probabilities that his beloved Son was devoured by wild Beasts. And now they thought all was well, they had reaped their malice and concealed their guilt, they kept their countenances, fed upon the sweets of revenge, and all this while their Conscience felt no regret. Till at last, (as God would have it) they themselves fall into the hands of him they thought they had made away ; their necessities compel them to go down to *Egypt*, and there the man, the Governour of the Land lookt sternly upon them, pretends to take them for spies, and threatens to deal severely with them. Then courage fails them, and Conscience recovers : *We are verily guilty* (say they) *of the blood of our Brother, when we saw the anguish of his Soul, &c.* What is the matter now, what alters the case, how comes *Joseph* to their minds now, who had been so long forgotten ? Now they find they stand in need of mercy, and therefore sadly remember how merciless they had been before ; now they pity poor *Joseph*, for whom before they had no compassion ; now they have bowels, when their own case was sad, and their punishment leads them to a remembrance of their guilt.

Thus we see affliction if it doth not make men good, yet at least it will not suffer them to be at ease

ease in their sin, and so disposes them towards repentance. But contrariwise, prosperity raises the passions and depresses Conscience: it hath made many from hopefull and tolerable, become bad and intolerable, but scarcely ever improved any from bad to good. It is a well known story of *Zeno*, who was as intent as any other man upon the amassing of wealth, and as much taken with the gait of the world, so long as his Merchandize succeeded: but when he shipwrackt his Fortunes he recovered his reason, and applied himself to the study of Philosophy and the enriching of his mind. *Naufragio ruitus & felix infortunio*, his undoing was his making, and his misfortune proved his recovery. And this the Holy Psalmist observes to be a common case, for *Psal. 55. 19.* he gives this account of mens obstinate impiety, *because (saith he) they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.* And Saint Peter also, *2 Pet. 3. 4.* represents it as the common argument upon which such men encourage themselves in the contempt of all Religion, *where (say they) is the promise of his coming? for since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were, &c.* as if he had said, Whilst there were visible interpositions of the Divine Providence in the world, and that God was wont presently by some remarkable judgment or other to revenge himself upon those that violated his Laws and affronted his Majesty, so long the world was kept in some awe, and Religion revered; but from such times as there hath been a constant calm and no interruption of the course of common causes, men have called in question, whether there be any Providence at all in this World? and if once they can perswade themselves God hath left off to mind the affairs of the present world, they will confidently

*Andronicus
Rhodius
discourses
excellent*

dently and with some colour of reason infer, that then he will not call things to account hereafter. Wherefore it is the usual method of the Divine Wisdom to make way for the reasons and motives of Religion by affliction: first softning the obdurate heart by some sharp cross, taking down the pride, confuting the Atheism, curing the wantonness and delicacy of men's tempers, and so bringing them to a cool and thoughtfull condition; and to reason with themselves as the Prodigal in the Text.

ly to this purpose, that *Aurora* prodigality and licentious living, hath amongst many mischiefs, yet these few good circumstances. 1. *Al-va-las me-gu-er-er*, it cannot last long, but will quickly exhaust the stock that feeds it; and then 2. *Urd + A-ur-ka-ka-ud Urd + m-l-pas + U-ard + am-p-las x-an-ur la-Su-ras + A-ur-er*, &c. the miseries he brings upon himself by his extravagancy may be a likely means to bring him to see his Error and amend. In *Ethic. Nicomach. lib. 4. c. 2.*

From all which we learn both the hardness of a vicious heart, in that nothing can pierce it but affliction, and also the blindness and folly of men, who so passionately desire prosperity, together with the great usefulness of affliction: and from all these, that it proceeds not from harshness and severity in God that he sends calamities upon the sons of men, but there is an illustrious instance of his wisdom, and of his goodness, in those providential dispensations, since this is the only way of recovering and making men good and happy.

S. IV. Let us now see in the last place somewhat particularly what are the considerations the Prodigal entertains his thoughts upon in this his afflicted condition. And consulting the Text, and carrying along with us a just notion of the nature of the case, we shall find those reducible to these four points.

1. He

1. He considers what the condition was he is fallen from, and how happy he might have been, had it not been for his own folly. *How many hired Servants, &c. qd.* "I that am pinched with want now, felt none in my Father's House; I was liberally maintained, honourably treated, wanted nothing but the wisdom to understand my own felicity, and in this condition I might have continued: for neither did my Father's Estate complain of the burden of my accommodations, nor was he strait handed, or abated any thing of his Fatherly affections towards me; it was nothing but my own folly ruined me. And then

2. He proceeds to deplore the sad Estate he is fallen into: "When I set out from my Father's House in quest of liberty, did I ever dream of becoming a Slave? when I despised the liberal provisions of his Family, did I or could I have thought I should come to want Bread, to feed upon Husks? How sad is the change, how severe is my fate, which I know no more how to bear than how to avoid! But that's not the worst yet. For,

3. He forethinks what is like to be the issue of this. "It is not only feeding upon Husks, but I perish for hunger. I have a prospect of nothing but death before me in the case I am in; I am lost, undone, undone in the most dreadful circumstances; for I perish, and it is with hunger; death makes its sure approaches, and that in the most ghastly shape: *vivens vidensque perco, I see and feel my self dying.*

4. But yet in the last place, he looks about him to see if there be not some escape. "I am dying, (saith he) but not quite dead. Whilest there is life there is hope; Who will not catch hold

" hold of any thing rather than perish ? And it
 " agrees not with my condition to stick at any
 " thing that can minister the least probability of
 " safety. Am not I a Son, though I am here a
 " Slave ? have I not a Father, and hath not he
 " pity ? why then do I stand still and die, and not
 " rather make the utmost experiment ^{and gain} ?

After this manner we may feel the pulse of the
 Prodigal Son to beat, and the thoughts of a Sin-
 ner, whom God hath awakened by affliction, move
 in such after the same rate. For first, as soon as his
 Eyes are opened, he cannot choose but call to mind
 the blessedness of a state of innocency, and reason
 with himself on this wise. " Whatever my case
 " is now, sure I was made in the Image of God,
 " placed under the Eye of his Providence, as it
 " were of his Family and Table, Heaven and Earth
 " ministered to me, I was Lord of the Lower, and
 " Favourite of the upper World, as if the one was
 " made on purpose to exercise and divert me, and
 " the other to receive and reward me. I
 " have a nature capable of immortality, and had
 " eternal life designed for me as the inheritance of
 " a Son : and my task of obedience was as easie
 " and honourable as my hopes were glorious. For
 " I had no hard burthen laid upon me, nothing
 " required of me but what was proportionable to
 " my powers, and agreeable to the reason of my
 " mind ; no restraint was laid upon my passions,
 " but such as was evidently both necessary for the
 " World and good for myself, that it could not
 " be drawn into an argument of harshness and se-
 " verity in God, nor make apology for my trans-
 " gression. All my faculties were whole and in-
 " tire, I was neither tempted by necessity, nor op-
 " pressed by any fate ; I was therefore happy &
 " nough

" nough, and why am I not so still? It is true
 " that humane nature hath miscarried since it
 " came out of the hands of God, and I carry the
 " Scar of that common Wound; yet is the dam-
 " mage of the first *Adam* so repaired by the se-
 " cond, that Mankind is left Inexcusable in all its
 " actual transgressions; but especially in a disso-
 " lute and impenitent course of rebellion. Be-
 " sides, I see others whose circumstances were in
 " all points the same with mine, and their diffi-
 " culties and temptations no less, to live holily
 " and comfortably, having either escaped the too
 " common pollutions of the World by an early
 " compliance with the grace of God, or at least,
 " quickly recovered themselves by repentance: I
 " find therefore that I might have lived in the
 " light of God's countenance, in serenity of mind,
 " quiet of conscience, sense of my own integrity,
 " and comfortable hopes of unspeakable glory; in
 " contemplation of which I might have defied
 " death, and lived in Heaven upon Earth: but I
 " have been merely fooled by my own inconstancy,
 " and undone by my own choice. For proceeds he,
 " 2. " I have forfeited all this by sinning against
 " God, and been so sottish as to prefer the satis-
 " faction of my own humour before all the afore-
 " said felicities. I have been ingratefull towards
 " my great Benefactor, broken the Law of my
 " Creation, confronted the wisdom of the most
 " High, been insolent towards a mighty Majesty,
 " violated just and righteous commandments, sin-
 " ned against light, knowledge and conscience, ad-
 " ded presumption to folly, wilfulness to weakness,
 " despised counsels, exhortations, promises, assis-
 " tances; my sins are many in number, horrible
 " in their aggravations, deadly in their continu-

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" ance,

"ance, and my perseverance in them. By this
 "means I have not only wrought disorder in the
 "world, but disordered my own Soul, spoiled my
 "own powers, suffered passion to get head of my
 "reason, clouded my understanding, and so by
 "former sins rendered it in a manner necessary
 "that I sin still. *For when I would do good, evil*
 "*is present with me; I find a law in my members re-*
 "*belliſg againſt the law of my mind, and carrying*
 "*me into captivity to the law of ſin. O wretched*
 "*man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from this bo-*
 "*dy of death?* I have driven away the good Spi-
 "rit of God, and put my ſelf under the power of
 "Satan, become his ſlave and drudge. I know no-
 "thing now of the comforts of innocence, of the
 "joy of a good Conſcience, mine is a continual
 "torture to me, I have loſt the light of God's
 "countenance, and the very thoughts of him are
 "dreadfull to me; by all which together life is a
 "burden, and yet the thoughts of death are into-
 "lerable. Such reflections and conſiderations as
 theſe break the very heart of a ſinner, and reſolve
 him into ſighs and tears.

3. But this is not the worſt of the caſe, for in
 the third place he conſiders what is like to be the
 iſſue of this. "This miſerable life (ſaith the ſin-
 "ner) cannot laſt always, death will arreſt me
 "ſhortly, and preſent me before a juſt Tribunal,
 "the grave will e'er long cover me, but not be a-
 "ble to conceal me, for I muſt come to Judg-
 "ment. Methinks I hear already the ſound of
 "the laſt Trump, *Let the dead ariſe, let them come*
 "*to judgment.* I ſee the Angels as Apparitors ga-
 "thering all the World together, and preſenting
 "them before that dreadfull Tribunal. How ſhall
 "I be able with my guilty Conſcience to appear
 "upon

" upon that huge Theatre, before God, Angels
 " and Men? Methinks I see the Devil standing at
 " my right hand to aggravate those faults which
 " he prompted me to the commission of. I be-
 " hold the Books opened, and all the debaucheries,
 " extravagancies and follies of my whole life laid
 " open, *Christ* the Judge of all the World, com-
 " ing in flaming fire to take vengeance upon them
 " that have not known him, nor obeyed his Go-
 " spel. How shall I endure his presence? how
 " shall I escape his Eye? I cannot elude his judg-
 " ment, nor evade his sentence; come then ye
 " Rocks and fall upon me, and ye Mountains co-
 " ver me from the face of the Lamb, and from
 " him that sitteth upon the Throne. But the
 " Rocks rend in sunder, the Sea and the Earth dis-
 " close their dead, the Earth dissolves, the Hea-
 " vens vanish as a Scroll, and I hear the dreadfull
 " Sentence, *Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire,*
 " *prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* Methinks
 " I hear *Christ Jesus* thus upbraiding me: You
 " have listened to the Devil and not to me, I
 " would have saved you, but you would not be
 " ruled by me; you have chosen the way of death,
 " now therefore you shall be filled with your own
 " ways; I forewarned you what would be the is-
 " sue of your courses, but you would have your
 " full swing of pleasure for the present, whatever
 " came of it hereafter; you laughed at judgment,
 " and it is come in earnest; you have had your
 " time of jollity and sensual transports, and now
 " your portion is *weeping, and wailing, and gnash-*
 " *ing of teeth.* Otherefore (saith the sinner) that
 " I had never been born, cursed be the day that
 " brought me forth, and the Sun that shone up-
 " on me; would the womb had been my grave,

“ and I had never seen the light. Thus my guilty
 “ Conscience anticipates its own punishment, and
 “ I am tormented before my time.

4. “ But is there no hope left? must I lie down
 “ thus in sorrow and despair? These things I may
 “ justly expect, but they are not yet incumbent up-
 “ on me; I am yet alive, and they say there is
 “ hopes in the land of the living; the door is not
 “ yet shut against me, Hell hath not yet closed
 “ her mouth upon me. I have heard God is a
 “ mercifull God, and thereupon I presumed hither-
 “ to, and abused his goodness; but sure his mer-
 “ cies are above the measure of a man; if they be
 “ infinite like himself, he hath more goodness than
 “ I have ingratitude. Possibly there may be some
 “ hope left in the bottom of this *Pandora's Box*
 “ of calamities; if there be none, it is in vain to
 “ repent, fruitless to weep, endless to bewail, mad-
 “ ness to add to my own infelicities. If there be
 “ a rigid fate upon me, I will *curse God, and die.*
 “ But sure whilst there is a God there must be good-
 “ ness, his Name speaks his Nature; will he *break*
 “ *a bruised reed*? will he contend with dust and
 “ ashes? Can infinite perfection be implacable and
 “ inexorable? It is true he hath no need of me,
 “ but for the same reason he cannot delight in
 “ my misery. He cannot repent and change his
 “ mind, because his wisdom foresaw from the be-
 “ ginning all possible contingencies; but if I re-
 “ pent and change my mind, the same inchange-
 “ ableness of his will oblige him as well then to
 “ save me, as before to destroy me. How far he
 “ will extend mercy, and what instances he will
 “ make of it I cannot define; but who knows but
 “ he may yet admit of my submission? however,
 “ I cannot be worse than I am, and it is possible
 “ my

" my condition may be better; here I perish cer-
 " tainly, if I cast my self upon his goodness I can
 " but perish, therefore I will try, *I will arise and*
 " *go to my father, &c.* And thus his deliberation
 brings him to resolution, which is the second Stage
 of Repentance.

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 which are necessary to the attainment of the Kingdom of
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 the tenth Stage of Repentance, and the manner in which it
 is to be performed.

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CHAP.

W. I. I have been in the former Chapter
 the manner of an awakened Conscience, the workings of a
 troubled mind, and the first principles of hope, and of
 repentance. But let not any man think that when he is
 at this condition, his work is done, his peace made
 with God, and he become a true Convert. For if
 he stay here he perishes as certainly as if he had
 never made any reflection, or considered at all.

C H A P. II.

Of Resolution.

The CONTENTS.

- § I. *That Consideration, and all those other previous acts of the mind mentioned in the former Chapter frequently miscarry, and are nothing till they are fixed by Resolution.*
- § II. *The nature of Resolution of the will, and the force and efficacy thereof; which is shewed to be such, as that the Devil, nor any other being under God can force it. The importance of that truth briefly shewed, and the proof of it from experience.*
- § III. *The properties of a true Penitent Resolution.*
 1. *That it be not rash but deliberate.* 2. *That it be peremptory.* 3. *Present.* And 4. *Uniform and universal.*
- § IV. *The inducements of a Penitent Resolution.*
 1. *Its availableness with God by the exorableness of his nature.* 2. *The possibility of performing it.* And 3. *The easiness of it by the power of his grace,*
 4. *The flat necessity of coming to it.*

§ I. **W**E have seen in the foregoing Chapter the motions of an awakened Conscience, the workings of a troubled mind, and therein the first glimpses of hope, and signs of recovery. But let not any man think that when he is arrived at this condition, his work is done, his peace made with God, and he become a true Convert. For if he stay here he perishes as certainly as if he had never made any reflection, or considered at all. Is it

one

one thing to be apprehensive of ones danger, and a far greater to have escaped it. The discovery of a disease is necessary in order to the cure, but it is far from the cure it self. It is an unhappy but not an unusual sight, to see men upon whom either the pain of some present affliction, or the fearfull prospect of divine vengeance hereafter, may have so far prevailed, as to make them with great shame and abhorrence reflect upon their former disorders, and cast up their pleasant morsels, who yet shall quickly return again to their own vomit, and resume their usual extravagancies. A Rock it self may be observed to drop upon change of weather, which nevertheless relents not, but is as hard, and as much a Rock as ever. And some extraordinary accident may rouse the most careless sinner, and put him upon an effort of purging off his impurities, who yet when the storm is over, shall settle again upon his Lees. It is no very rare thing to observe men dissolve into tears, and weep as heartily over their old sins, as ancient Friends do when there is a necessity of parting; and yet (like them) wish and hope to meet and enjoy each other again.

Therefore as we see the formerly dissolute, but now relenting Son in the Text, contents not himself with passionate expressions, or ineffective wishes, but resolves upon action, *I will arise* (saith he) *and go to my Father*: So the true penitent sinner that is in earnest to save his Soul, sits not down under a dozing melancholy, pleases not himself with wishing and complaining, spends not his time in doubting and disputing, but puts himself forward upon the business: "For (saith he) whilst
" I sit still, time passes away, life runs out apace,
" and death and judgment are coming on, where-

"fore some speedy course must be taken, and
 "there is but one way that affords any hope,
 "which is that of real reformation; in which
 "case no deliberations shall hold me longer in
 "suspence, no sloth shall benumb me, nothing
 "shall tempt me to delay any longer. I am re-
 "solved I will make the experiment of becoming
 "a new man from an old sinner, and upon these
 "terms I will cast my self upon God's mercy, and
 "if I perish I perish.

§. II. This is the second Stage of Repentance,
 (*viz.*) Resolution, which I am now farther to
 treat of. But it is evident by what we have said
 already, that the Resolution we are to speak of, is
 not a meer logical conclusion by way of inference
 from premises, that such or such a thing is best and
 fit to be done, for every man that uses his reason
 cannot choose but speculatively assent to this as his
 duty and his interest, the proceedings of reason
 being as natural and necessary as those of sense.
 Insomuch that it is not in a man's power to deny
 a plain consequence, or disbelieve what there is
 evident reason for. There is therefore no moral
 virtue in such a conclusion, and so a man may pe-
 rish notwithstanding: as it is too notorious that
 many do, who act contrary to such conclusions of
 their reason. But the Resolution we here in-
 tend, and which we make the second step of Re-
 pentance is practical, and the act of the will;
 namely, its decretory and definitive sentence for
 the actual prosecution of such a course, as by Con-
 sideration and the former process of reason is dis-
 covered to be fit and necessary. Or rather, it is
 the wills actual application of it self to the busi-
 ness, in conformity to which, all the inferiour
 powers

powers are put into action also, as being subject to its authority, influenced upon by its power, and carried about with the swinge of this *primum mobile*, this first and great Orb of the Soul.

For the more clear understanding of this power of the will, and of the nature of Resolution, let us suppose Reason and Sense as two parties pleading their respective causes and interests; in which case, if we should suppose a kind of drawn Battle between them, and the matter left in *aequilibrio*; notwithstanding, it is within the power of the will to give the cause which way it pleases; or suppose also, that Reason acquits it self never so well, and baffles its adversary, yet all will be but a speculation, and no effects follow till the will interposes its sovereignty, and decrees peremptorily what shall be done. And then whatever the merits of the cause be, the inferiour powers without dispute apply themselves to the execution. For (to use another allusion) Reason is as the Card which directs the course, and shews what is fittest to be done: but the Will is as the Helm and Rudder that turns about the whole Fabrick. This is that which is called *Ἀντιθέσις*, i. e. not a lawfulness or authority to do what we will, nor yet an ability to effect whatever we please; but a capacity within our selves of determining our selves, and making our own choice.

Now that we have indeed such a capacity is matter of daily experience; for we cannot but have observed, that oftentimes when Reason and Religion have recommended such things to us, and convinced us of the importance of them, yet we have followed our passions notwithstanding, and done quite contrary to the clearest dictates of our mind, in the words of the Apostle, Rom. 7. 23. *We have found a law in our members rebelling against the law*

of our mind, and leading us captive to the law of sin. And contrariwise, sometimes we have checked and subdued the importunities of our passions, and cast the scale on the side of Conscience and Religion, and both these out of the freedom of our own Souls. It is true, that very ordinarily in the former of these cases, the Devil may promote the business by his temptations; and in the latter it is certain (as we heretofore have given caution) that there is the concurrence of the Divine Grace, and influence of the Holy Spirit; but both in the one and the other man acts freely nevertheless, suffering no violence nor compulsion. For though there can be no doubt, but that God (who made man, and can dissolve him when he pleases) by the exercise of his Omnipotence may controul the elections of men, or over-rule them to whatsoever he will; yet it is not reasonable to think he will, or doth ordinarily do so. Determine them to evil he cannot, upon the account either of his own purity, justice, or wisdom; and for his over-bearing them to the doing of that which is good, besides that we cannot understand how it leaves any room for reward in such a case; it seems as much to reproach his wisdom in the first creation of such beings, as to display his power in controuling their actions and elections, and would be as unseemly a *Phænomenon*, as for him to cross and pervert the common course of natural causes.

And for the Devil, though he by the order of his Creation be of an higher rank, and of greater power than we; yet he is by no means able to force our wills, or to rescind the decrees of a free mind. God permits him to use his cunning, and to shew his malice, in contriving baits to allure and catch us, and several ways to give us disturbance; but
if

if he should allow him to force us, we may be sure there should never have been any one good man in the world.

The objects that present themselves to us from without, can but court our acceptance, not obtrude themselves upon us: they knock at our door but cannot break in upon us; or they present us motives to alter our resolutions, but it is in our power still, whether we will revoke them.

Example, and the common usage of the world, the power of which is so much magnified by some men, as if they thought it sufficient to make an apology for all our follies; It is so inconsiderable in this case, that if we duly consider its efficacy, we must pronounce of it, that it works only metaphorically not physically, and is at most but an Ideal cause, (if we will call it so) sufficient to abuse men of soft and easie minds, but not the manly and generous. As for the lower and meerly animal powers in us, they (as we noted before) may corrupt the imagination, and begin to form a seditious party within us; but it is still in the power of the will (till it dethrones itself) so to suppress them that they shall never be successful in their rebellion.

But then in the last place, for Reason it self, which some Men governing themselves by an old maxime, (*voluntas semper sequitur dictamen intellectus*) suppose to prescribe so authoritatively to the will; as that the priviledge of freedom belongs rather to the former than the latter; if that were true, (*i. e.* if the will must proceed upon the dictates of reason) there would be no such thing as liberty at all, because it is not in our power what light our understanding shall have, and as I have noted before, we cannot believe what we will, nor understand

Advant
jus de
Judi
pau
nyad
Dida,
Arani
piB. lib. 3:
cap. 7.

understand things otherwise than they are represented to us; therefore if the will have not a power of acting contrary to our understanding, as perfect a fatality is introduced, as is to be found amongst natural agents. Besides, we find by constant observation of our selves and the world, that in passion, in love, in the pursuit of riches, and honour, and most of our prosecutions, we sometimes follow our reason, sometimes go before it, and sometimes quite cross it. It is true indeed, we ordinarily have some (either reason or pretence of reason) or other, to countenance our elections, because otherwise it could not be called choice where there is no end propounded, or design aimed at, (which I think is all that the aforesaid absolute maxime intends.) Nevertheless since it is manifest we oftentimes follow that which we know, not to be the best reason, even then when we follow it, we may thereby be sufficiently convinced of the arbitrary power of our own Wills.

This which we have been asserting is a truth of that importance, that the denial thereof (1.) cuts the very sinews of all industry, (2.) destroys the differences of good and evil, (3.) takes away all principles of Conscience, (4.) all arguments of Repentance, (as we have shewed before) and (5.) herewith makes that natural passion of ingenuous shame, which mankind is peculiarly endowed with, utterly senseless and unaccountable. But the truth of this supposed, we easily understand both the nature and force of resolution, which is the only thing we have aimed at.

To proceed therefore: The Son in the Text conscious of this truth, and as well sensible of his own liberty, as certain of the necessity of taking some course or other to relieve himself, saith in the words

words before recited, *I will arise, I will go to my Father, I will say unto him, &c.* And the Resolutions of every Penitent are to the same effect; (*viz.*) “ I will not sit with my hands folded up as a man insatuated and fitted for destruction: I will spend no more time in doubting and disputing, nor abandon my self to desperation; I’ll endeavour both to cease to do evil, and to learn to do well; I will take shame to my self, acknowledge my folly, and accept the punishment of my iniquity. I will earnestly deprecate the divine displeasure, and implore his mercy and pardon. In short, whatsoever difficulty appear in the business, or whatsoever temptations may assault me, I will desist my former course, and make it my care to undo all that was amiss, and make amends for my former follies by my future zeal and diligence.

§. III. But that these things may be the more evident, let us now in the next place see the properties and essential requisites of a true Penitent Resolution. And they are these four.

1. *It is deliberate, and taken up upon mature consideration.*
2. *It is peremptory.*
3. *It is a resolution de presenti.*
4. *Lastly, It is universal.*

First, a true Resolution is serious and deliberate, not like those rash vows which men make in a fit or an agony; and which last no longer than the heat, or the distress. Many Men there are that now and then take a pet at their old sins, when they have found themselves disappointed of either the pleasure or the security which they promi-

*Stomachum illi fecit
luxuria: cito tamen
cum illa redibit in gra-
tiam. Sed dicit se of-
fendi vitam suā; non
negaverim, Quis enim
non offenditur? Homi-
nes vitam suam & a-
micos suos & aderunt,
&c. Senec. Epist. 112.
sed*

*Infigi debet
persuasio
ad totam
vitam per-
tinens; hoc
est quod de-
cretum vo-
co. Sen. Ep.
95.*

Jos. 24. 15.

sed themselves in the enjoyment of them; or that for their sake they are surprized with some calamity they did not expect; and whilst that disgust lasts, they seem mightily resolved for ever to break with them; but as soon as that mood is over, like old friends, they are quickly reconciled, and return to their former graciousness. It is not to be doubted but that the Prodigal Son had many a Lucid interval before this; and as often as he met with any sharp cross or vexation in his way, had relenting thoughts, and wished himself again at his Father's house; but it was but a flash, an *extempore* motion, a passion, not a cool rational choice; there was no deliberation, and therefore no Resolution, and so nothing came of it. *That* (saith Seneca) *which amounts to a resolution must be settled in the mind, founded in reason, rooted in the judgment, not loose, occasional, and upon emergency.* When a man having considered all the pleasures and advantages of sin on the one hand, and all the difficulties and self-denial of vertue on the other, hath measured the hopes and the fears, compared the present with the future, and represented the whole Series of things to his own mind; and then comes to a conclusion, this is Resolution. Such a determination as this Joshua puts the people of *Israel* upon; on the one hand he represents to them the great reasons they had to adhere to, and serve the true God of *Israel*; and on the other, the difficulties of so doing; the sincerity and accuracy which his Worship and Service required, and the danger of his severity if they neglected it: and then he exhorts them to lay their hand upon their heart, to consider all things with themselves, to resolve of nothing rashly, but upon the fullest satisfaction: *vers. 15. If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord,*
choose

choose you this day whom you will serve, &c. and vers. 16. the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord to serve other Gods, &c. and then lastly, vers. 26. He writes all these passages in a Book, makes an authentick record thereof, and withall sets up a stone of memorial to make the greater impression, and to give the more solemnity to the whole business.

And this same thing is that which our Saviour himself intends in those two famous Parables, concerning the man about to build a Tower, and the Prince going to War; which we have taken notice of before. Our Saviour would have men that come to him, and pretend to embrace his Religion, to count the cost of it, to know the worst of things, to reckon upon all that may happen: and so also *Jesús the Son of Syrach* advises, *Eccius* 2. 1, 2. *My Son if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy Soul for temptation. q. d.* If thou designest to enter upon a course of vertue, thou must forethink the impediments as well as the encouragements, the conflict as well as the crown, and arm thy self with resolution accordingly.

Luk. 14.
28, &c.

It is the artifice of the Devil to represent only the fair side of things to men, to hide the hook with the bait. It's noted by the Evangelist, that he shewed our Saviour *the Kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them*, he set forth no Scene of the troubles, vexations, vanities and disappointments of the world, but all was beauty and glory. For he designs to surprize and lies at catch for men, and knows it is his interest they should not consider, nor curiously inquire into the just state of things, but take a transient glance only, and do all in a hurry.

Matt. 4. 8.

But it is not God's way to surprize men, and make advantage of their inadvertency, for he is not pleased

Matt. 13-

pleased with the sacrifice of Fools; it is a *reasonable service* he requires, (*viz.*) that Men consider what they do, and chuse him wisely and seriously. Nor is it the condition of vertue to have an alluring out-side, to tempt Men's passions, or impose upon their imaginations; it hath a matronal beauty, no meretricious paint; it consists in a real and substantial excellency, which only can work upon him that considers: so that no man falls in love with it upon a glance, nor espouses it suddenly; but upon calm debate of its real and inward perfections. And his love is founded in reason, matured by time, and confirmed by experience. Or if there be any that pretends to vertue upon other terms, it is no uncharitableness to prophesie, that whatever his present heats and transports may be, they will quickly cool and come to nothing. Such cases being fitly resembled by our Saviour to the *stony ground*, which received the seed with joy at first, and promised fair for a mighty Harvest; but having not depth of Earth brought nothing to perfection: Psal. 129. 7. *The Mower filled not his hand therewith; nor the Reaper his bosom.*

And indeed herein seems to lie the true and immediate reason of most or all of those shamefull apostasies, by which the name of God and Religion are so much dishonoured: (*viz.*) that Men fall off from hopefull beginnings, and *end in the flesh*, after they had begun in the Spirit, as the Apostle's phrase is, namely, there was not depth of Earth, no sufficient serious consideration of what they undertook. For it is certain, there are no insuperable difficulties in Religion, no irresistible temptations to the contrary; God is not worse than his word, nor doth change his terms, nor can any Man see any reason to alter his mind if he calcula-

calculated as he might have done at first ; but they considered not, counted not the cost, and so are surprized and beaten off. And the holy Gospel gives us no less a Man than St. *Peter* himself, for instance hereof : He in a great pang of devotion to his Master goes out before the Camp of *Israel*, defies *Goliath* and all the uncircumcised Philistines, dares and challenges danger it self ; and, Lord (saith he) *If all men should forsake thee, yet will not I : If I must die for thee, I will not forsake thee.* But it was only an heat, and a bravery of the Apostle ; he had not seriously considered the business, nor forecasted what might ensue ; there was no mature deliberation, no preparations for a real encounter, and therefore it sped accordingly, and he came off shamefully : and in him we have a standing example of the frailty of the greatest passion, and of the necessity that counsel and deliberation ground our Resolutions. By which means also they will become,

2. **Decretory and Peremptory**, which is the second property of virtuous Resolution. There are some Men whom an affectionate discourse, a serious Sermon, or any notable accident, will put into a fit of devotion, which shall last only until something else come in the way, and then the former impressions give way to the latter. These we commonly call good natured men, whose facility of temper puts them at the mercy of every contingency, and they are good and bad as occasion serves: *Clouds they are without water, carried about of every wind*, (as St. Jude expresses it, *vers. 12*) or as St. James, *Double minded men, and unstable in all their ways*; Jam. 1. 8. that have no settled principle, nothing fixed and constant to govern themselves by. To these the Prophecy of Jacob

N

concerning

Οὐδ' αὖτις
ἐπαμφοτε-
ρῶν τῶν
κατὰ τοῦ
κόσμου, A-
rian. Epiſt.
lib. 3. c. 3.

concerning his Son *Reuben*, may fitly be applied, *Gen. 49. 4. Unstable as water, therefore thou shalt not excell*: such irresolute tempers can never arrive at any excellency of vertue. The people of the *Jews* had no doubt a good mind to be in possession of the Land of *Canaan*, notwithstanding whenever they met with any difficulty, then *would to God we were again by the flesh-pots of Egypt*; and none of these light and mutable persons ever came to the good Land. There were *Anakims* and *Giants*, and a thousand difficulties ran in their heads which enfeebled them for the enterprize; only *Joshua* and *Caleb*, and such as were animated by their brave example, and said, *Come, let us go up, for we are able to conquer*: only such, I say, came to the possession of it: *1 Kings 18. 21. How long halt ye between two opinions?* (said the Prophet to the Men of *Israel*.) *If Baal be God serve him, but if Jehovah be God then serve him. q. d.* Whether you serve the true God or the false, irresolution spoils all devotion either way; for whilst you doubt and dispute your way, you do but halt towards your end and design. Accordingly *Moses* in-deavours to raise a generosity of mind in the men of *Israel*, by those words, *Deut. 26. 17. Thou hast vouched the Lord this day to be thy God: q. d.* It now becomes you to be religious in earnest, to serve God with a perfect heart and a willing mind, for you have now put it past all dispute, you have chosen and resolved the Lord to be your God, and therefore be consistent with your selves.

There is no vertue in a faint velleity, when Men shall speak as *Agrippa* in the *Acts*, *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*. It is no wisdom to put in Cautions now, 'tis only the language of the sluggard, to say *there is a Lion in the way. Post-*
quam

Quam consulueris maturi facto opus est. All gallantry of mind is now (after deliberation) to take up an immoveable resolution; for Vertue is neither a wary diffidence nor a hot fit of zeal, but a constant vital heat, and a settled temper of mind. The young man in the Gospel, St. Mark 10. 22. comes to our Saviour, *Good Master what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?* He thought it a fine thing to be a Candidate of the other World: eternal life which our Saviour preached and promised, was a glorious and very desirable thing; and he could be well content to become a Disciple of Christ, and to do some very good thing that he might attain it. For indeed, eternal life is that which no Man can chuse but desire; to have a mind to be saved is no sign of grace; for a man must expressly hate himself should he do otherwise. Thus far therefore he was right; but after all this he went away sorrowfull without his errand; he had not thoroughly resolved with himself to go through with it, he could not find in his heart (like the wise Merchant) to *sell and part with all he had to purchase this pearl of inestimable price.* But the true Penitent lets down an immoveable resolution to go through whatever it cost him. "I have faultered too long already (saith he) now *stat sententia*, it is as the Law of the Medes and Persians with me, nothing shall dispense with my purpose, or foil my resolutions. I will now *re- turn.* And that brings me to the

3. Third property of a vertuous resolution: It is *de presenti*, a present Resolution; like that of the Psalmist, Psal. 119. vers. 59, 60. *I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet to thy precepts. I made hast, and delayed not to keep thy righteous judgments.* q. d. "My consideration led me to resolu-

tion of amendment, and I found the nature and consequence of that was such, as to admit of no delay; I therefore set presently about it. A resolution of amendment which commences not presently, but intends to do it hereafter, is no repentance nor any good sign of grace, forasmuch as it is probable that there is no man in the whole world, at least under the light of the Gospel, and who hath ever reflected upon himself, or thought of God and another life, but hath some time or other resolved to become a new man. And indeed, this is the most fatal cheat men put upon themselves, and I fear now there are multitudes entered into the Chambers of Darknes, and an irreverfible Estate, that for a great part of their lives carried along with them both convictions of the necessity of reformation, and resolutions one time or other to set about it. For as I said before, it is but self-love to desire eternal life; and no man that considers at all, can think but something must be done for the attainment of it; or (so thinking) can so desperately abandon himself as not to intend to do it. But he understands not sufficiently either the evil or the danger of sin, much less hath any true sense of vertue, that can find in his heart to procrastinate and adjourn the resolution of casting off the former and applying himself to the latter: For where the mischief is intolerable on the one hand, and the good and happiness the most unspeakable and highest that can be, on the other; there can be neither wisdom nor safety in any other course than that which Solomon directs, Eccles. 9. 10. *Whatever thy hand finds to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest.* When once death hath closed

The Reader is desired to peruse three short but sad stories to this purpose in Dr. J. Taylor's Great Exemplar. Part. 3. Disc. 19. Self. 5.

closed our Eyes, the time of probation is over, the day of grace certainly shuts in, and *the night cometh when no man can work*: And who that either understands the frail contexture of his body, or the many thousand accidents it is subject to, can be warranty for his own life one moment beyond the present? or if that should be continued, who shall secure us that a day of grace shall last as long as we live? Who shall prescribe to the Almighty that he shall wait our leisure, and accept us at last? All which things considered, he that only resolves to amend hereafter, is certainly resolved not to amend now; and therefore is in no state of repentance, nor in the way of mercy.

Wherefore the true Penitent resolves presently to arise: "I have trifled too long already (saith he) It is no dallying any longer in a business of this nature. I have been couzened by my own heart oft enough, I will trust my self for day no longer. I do not find my heart either more willing or more able to perform by all the time I have given it: but quite contrary, my ability is less, and my debt greater; my heart harder, my affections more engaged, and less willing to come off. I do not find that the longer I serve the Devil, he is ever the likelier to manumit me; nay I feel the longer I serve him, the heavier Chains he lays upon me. If he can persuade me that it is yet too soon to return to God, he will by the same Logick persuade me hereafter that it is too late. And I find by experience that if my heart be bad to day, it is likely to be worse to morrow: I cannot think it reasonable to expect that God's Spirit will strive with me the more I resist him; nor dare I trust that grace should abound the more my sin abounds.

" A day neglected now, for ought I know, may
 " be as much as my Soul is worth, and may cost
 " me Eternity : now by God's grace I find it in
 " my heart to return, and I'll put it in Executi-
 " on. I will no more venture upon uncertainties,
 " nor forgo what is in my power for what is not :
 " I will not promise to pay hereafter what I am
 " not willing now to perform. No more there-
 " fore of the sluggard, *Yet a little sleep, a little*
 " *slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep.* I
 " will now arise and return to my Father, and to
 " my duty, which is

4. The fourth and last property of vertuous re-
 solution : namely, it is a through and uniform re-
 solution which takes in the whole business and com-
 pacts of Religion. The Historian observes of the
Romans in the degenerate times of their Common-
 wealth, that now all their disputes were not *an*
servirent sed cui, not for liberty, but who should be
their Lord : and they sought not to assert or re-
 cover their freedom, but meerly to have the choice
 of their Yoke, and so who ever conquered they were
 certainly slaves. In like manner some men being
 under convictions of Conscience of the evil and
 danger of the way they are in, resolve upon a
 change, but it is not to change themselves but their
 sins one for another. The Drunkard becomes co-
 vetous, the loose and licentious person exchanges
 his levity for morosity, and from a common scan-
 dal becomes a busy-body, a judge, and very censo-
 rious. And so the man is disguised rather than
 amended ; and hath a new Master, but is neverthe-
 less a Slave. Others perhaps there are who will
 go further, and part with a sin without a *succeda-*
neum, or entertaining any other in its room, be-
 cause it might happen that such a sin was grown
 less

less agreeable to their constitution, too chargeable for their profit, too dangerous to their reputation, and peradventure also too uneasie for their Consciences; but there are some other sins they can by no means think of foregoing. Thus the Scripture observes of some Kings of *Israel* that were great reformers, and expressed a mighty zeal against the Idolatry of *Ahab* and other corruptions; who yet all their days stuck close to the sin of *Jeroboam the Son of Nebat*: that kind of Idolatry was bound up with their interest, and therefore must not be laid aside.

Indeed, if we consider the matter well, we shall find the power of an inlightned Conscience to be such, as to prevail with any man to resolve either to forsake any one sin upon condition he might securely enjoy all the rest, or at least not to stick at any one duty of Religion, if thereby he might expiate his other commissions and omissions. And the *Jews* had a corrupt Doctrine amongst them very agreeable to this humour: namely, that if a man observed some one remarkable precept of the Law, it was enough to excuse him upon the whole; and that notion of theirs seems to have given occasion to that question so often put to our Saviour; *Which is the great commandment of the Law?* For they disputed amongst themselves upon that supposition, which was the one surest point to trust to, whether to Sacrifice as some held, or to Circumcision as others, or to the observation of the Sabbath as a third, &c. I say their intent was to ask his opinion what branch of the Law God most insisted upon, that in compliance therewith they might compendiously secure their own interest without the trouble of universal obedience: but our Saviour being aware of the subtlety, directs

Matt. 22.

35.

Mark 12.

28.

Luke 12.

18.

them in all the places forementioned to that Paragraph of the Law which was comprehensive of the whole : (*viz.*) *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy Soul, &c.*

The Devil is so wary and frugal a Trader that he will comply with the Market, and is content as I noted before, to barter one sin for another ; or rather to compound for half than to lose all : and is also so good a Philosopher as to know *malum oritur ex qualibet defectu, & bonum constat ex integris causis* ; That the voluntary omission of any one part of our duty nulls our obedience, and that one sin will damn a man as well as many. For he that retains a love to any one sin cannot be said to have a resolution against sin, or to hate sin for it self ; and God is resolved to have us intirely his, or not at all. For he that makes any exceptions or reservations, that capitulates with God, deals not with him as with a God. He therefore that takes up a penitent resolution is uniform and universal therein, fully decrees with himself to omit nothing that he knows to be his duty, nor to dispense with himself in the practice of any thing (how gratefull soever to him) that he knows to be a sin. “ I know (saith he) God by his sovereignty hath a just title to my whole life and to all
“ my powers ; he hath obliged me beyond all that
“ ever I can correspond with ; he is jealous of his
“ honour, and hates to be served deceitfully and
“ by halves ; he will admit of no rival, no sharer
“ with him ; he sees all my wandrings, and will
“ be sure to revenge my Hypocrisy. I know he is
“ able and ready to reward sincerity above desert,
“ above expectation, beyond all thought and imagination. I am sensible that hitherto I have not
“ only joistered in his service, but declined it ;
“ nay

" nay opposed, affronted, rebelled against him ; I
 " have lifted my self under his professed Enemy,
 " and under that Banner I have spent a great part
 " of my time. Now may it please his infinite
 " goodness to accept me at last ; I vow to be in-
 " tirely his, I'll dispute no commands, I'll make
 " no exceptions, but I'll double my diligence, and
 " say with the exemplary Convert *S. Paul*, *what*
 " *wilt thou have me to do, Lord ?*

6. IV. Thus we have seen the nature and pro-
 perties of that which we called the hinge of con-
 version ; but let us now see what are the springs
 or plummets that set this great Engine on work ;
 or what are the considerations by way of motive,
 that put Men upon a resolution of repentance ;
 and they are principally these four.

1. *A persuasion that it will not be unsuccessful
 and unacceptable to God if we truly repent at last
 though we have been great sinners before.*

2. *An apprehension that it is not impossible to be-
 come perfectly new men, notwithstanding our pre-
 engagements in the ways of sin.*

3. *That it is not only possible but easie so to do if we
 set about it in earnest.*

4. *A clear preception, that whether it be easie or
 difficult, there is a plain necessity of it, and it must
 be done.*

1. The first motive to a resolution of repen-
 tance is a persuasion of mind that God is not inex-
 orable, but that repentance may find acceptance
 with him. It is a memorable story concerning the
Fusculani, a little people in Italy, who had so high-
 ly provoked the *Romans* that *Camillus* was leading
 his

*Soli vos Tus-
culani ve-
rat vires,
vera arma
quibus ab
ira Roma-
norum vos
tutavemi-
ni invoe-
mistis.*

** Crimina
nostra vel
fateri
intum
consemus,
cum tam
serio pœni-
tuit. Livy
Mist. lib. 6.*

his Army towards them to take revenge : but they growing quickly apprehensive of their danger, took an effectual course to appease a generous Enemy ; for they made no shew of resistance, but set open their Gates, and were found every Man hard at his ordinary affairs, submitting all to the will of those they knew themselves unable to contend with. Whereupon the brave *Camillus* speaks to them to this purpose. You (saith he) amongst all people have only found out the true way of abating the Roman fury, and your submission hath been your best defence ; upon these terms we can no more find in our hearts to injure you, than upon other terms you could have found power to oppose us. To whom the chief Magistrate on the other side thus replies. *We have* (saith he) *so in good earnest repented us of our former folly, that in confidence of that satisfaction to a generous enemy, we are not afraid to acknowledge our fault.*

Not much unlike to this is the sense of the relenting Son in the Text : " For (thinks he) what I have done amiss I can neither answer to my self, nor to my Father ; I can neither deny the fact, nor defend it ; therefore I must try what repentance will do, and appeal from his justice to his mercy. It is true I forsook my Father, but it was a Father I forsook, and that name speaks benignity ; and what may not a Son hope for from a Father ? There is Rhetorick in confession, and contrite submission hath mighty prevalence upon all ingenuous natures. *Quem pœnitet peccasse pœne est innocens.* Repentance uses to have the success even of innocency it self, and I that have failed of the one will try the other. My acknowledgment will prevent his accusation. If I condemn my self, I save my Father a labour ;

“labour; and when I abhor my self, I move his
“pity: especially if I become another man, he
“will see the same reason to receive me then, as he
“hath to reject me now.

And so the penitent towards God, “I have
“offended the Divine Majesty, but he is a God,
“and that name speaks goodness; if he be not as
“good as can be, he is not God; and if he be,
“nothing but what is good can proceed from him;
“and nothing that is good, but may be expected
“from him; therefore there is hope of pardon.

The wisdom of all the World hath agreed to
make it the constant stile of God, *Optimus Maxi-*
mus, the greatest Goodness, or the best Greatness:
goodness and mercy are as essential to him as pow-
er and justice; nay the very latter infer the former.
For what is there can tempt an infinitely perfect
Being to be cruel and inexorable? He that hath all
fulness in himself, can certainly envy nothing; can
hate nothing that he hath made, but must needs pi-
ty those that are below him, and delight to commu-
nicate himself to such as need him. Envy and Cruel-
ty are the issues of meer weakness, fear, want, and
impotency. The poor are apt to envy the rich, be-
cause these enjoy what they want; and we com-
monly observe, that the weakest and most timorous
Creatures are most revengefull and implacable:
The Coward is deadly and sanguinary because he
is not secure of his own strength, and therefore
dares not slip his opportunity, but strikes home
and mortally lest the danger should recoil upon
himself. But what rich and great man envies the
Beggar? or what valiant man was ever remorseless
and sanguinary? The former hath all the arguments
to pity, because he cannot want, and the latter all
the inducements to pardon because he cannot fear.

God

*Magnitu-
do, cum
mansuetu-
dine, om-
nis enim
ex infirmi-
tate feri-
tas est. Se-
nec. de vi-
ta beata
c. 3.*

God is above all danger, can be hurt by nothing, needs nothing, hath nothing to receive, but much to bestow ; he cannot therefore be prompted to take advantage against his Creatures, or delight in their misery, since the only ends he hath to serve upon them, is the enjoying his own fulness by reflection, the diffusing and communicating himself to them, and thereby making them happy.

When God was highly provoked by the sin of *David* in numbring the people, in which fact there was a complication of many evils, there was disobedience to an exprefs Law, there was distrust of the divine providence, and a vain confidence in the arm of flesh ; It pleased the Divine Majesty to notifie his displeasure by the Prophet *Nathan* ; and
 2 Sam. 24. withal, gives *David* his choice either of Pestilence, Famine, or Sword : the King refers it back again to God, whether he would please to punish by the Famine, or by the Pestilence ; for (saith he) *Let us fall into the hands of God, for his mercies are great ; but let us not fall into the hands of men.* He had rather trust the mercies of an incensed God, than lie at the mercy of mortal men. He knew they were transported with rage and fury, but God was pitiful ; they often forgot themselves, but God remembred sinners were but men, and dust and ashes. They would plague one another maliciously, but God chastised in wisdom and measure. And that with him according to the phrase of *S. James*, mercy κατακαυχεται rejoyceth against, glorieth and triumpheth over justice.

S. Jam. 3.
13.

Οὐ γὰρ
μὴ ἡ δὲ
μυστικῶς
ἡ δὲ παρ'
ἀξίαν, ἡ δὲ ἰσχυρὰ
καὶ παλαιὰ, καὶ ὅτι
δύναμις, &c.

The Discourse of a brave Heathen is excellent to this purpose. *We think it just* (saith he) *to give*

both

both thanks and reward to him that cures our bodily infirmities, though he do it not without some pain and trouble to us; and why should we not rather love God's methods as the Physician of Souls? there is no passion, nor much less revenge, in his proceedings with us; he neither cuts and lances us cruelly, nor uses any other sharpness than the case necessarily requires; he doth nothing with intention to hurt or grieve us, but proceeds with art and care designing our greatest good: and in a word, is in all his actions agreeable to the goodness and benignity of his own nature. The sum of all which, and of what we intend further to say, is that of the Apostle, God is good, and the goodness of God leadeth to repentance, Rom. 2. 5. For the consideration of that is the spring of hope, and of all motion by way of return.

There are indeed some men who have entertained very crude notions of the Divine Majesty, do sometimes assert on the one hand that vindictive justice is essential and natural to God, so that he is bound up to require strict satisfaction, and without it cannot properly pardon any transgression. And others on the other hand, talk at the same wild rate of his mercy and goodness, as if all the instances he makes thereof were also natural and necessary, and that he could not insist upon his own right, but must make all the expressions of kindness that are possible towards his Creatures. But both these notions are equally false and mischievous: the former of them representing God a rigid Majesty, and tending to make men despair; the other sets him forth as an easy and soft Deity, and tempting men to presume upon him: the one making him an object of horror, and the other of contempt; for who can love him that cannot pity, and who can reverence him who hath it not in
his

his power to do otherwise? The truth is therefore that all particular instances both of the one kind and of the other are subject to his wisdom; that he can exercise either mercy or severity as he sees occasion; for after this manner the Scripture speaks of him, that sometime *he hath mercy because he will have mercy; and that when he will be hardnerh sinners for destruction.*

And to think otherwise of God, especially in the case of mercy and pardon, as if he could not dispence it as he pleases, is to bring in a rigid fatality with the Stoicks instead of a God; and is so far from aggrandizing the Divine Majesty, that it is the greatest diminution of his power and glory, and renders him less than a man: for we can *recedere à nostro jure, remit of our own rights*, and give mercy a triumph over strict justice. And although the sinner when he offends against God, forfeits himself into the divine hand, and gives God just cause to punish him if he will, yet certainly he cannot by any act of his put a Law upon God, or oblige him to punish, if he think fit to shew mercy.

And then for the interest of God's Rectorship and government of the World, it is not a necessity of punishment that conserves that, but the power of freedom of punishing or remitting accordingly as it shall seem good to his own wisdom. Whereby men are both provoked to amendment by the hopes of pardon, and restrained from disobedience by the fear of punishment. For the liberty of dispensing either of these at pleasure, is that which produces a reverence towards the Divine Majesty; that is, a complication of love and fear, wherein the very notion of Religion consists.

Καὶ ἄνθε
τὸ σπλάγ-
χνα (τὸ
δὲ) καὶ
ἐκ ἀποκό-
λας τὴν
ἐλπίδα.
Vid. huc
spectantia
apud S. Ba-
sil. Hom.
28. de pa-
nitent.

It is not an impertinent passage to this purpose which we have in the Historian, when the young Gentlemen in the new Roman Commonwealth had a design to restore the Kingly Government in the family of the Tarquins, they had Speeches made amongst them to this effect. *To be bound up by the rigour of Laws which had no compassion, nor made allowance for contingency, was very harsh and unsafe, considering humane infirmity: But under Kingly Government there was power of dispensation, possibility of indulgence, liberty of interpretation, room for mercy and pardon: a man that fell, did not necessarily there miscarry. For there was place for intercession, repentance might relieve him; and the prerogative of the Prince was the security of the Subject.*

*Apud Ro-
gem esse
gratia la-
cum, esse*

beneficio, & irasci, & ignoscere posse. Lages vero rem surdam & inexorabilem esse, nihil laxamenti nec venis habere, periculosum esse in tot humanis erroribus, sola innocentia vivere. Liv. Hist. lib. 2.

Now that repentance is available with God we have all the assurance that can be desired; for besides what we have said already from the consideration of the perfections of the Divine nature, and his interest of the Government, repentance is the great and principal Doctrine of the Gospel, which the Son of God himself came to proclaim by his Preaching, to confirm by his Miracles, to make way for, and to procure acceptance to by his death and Sacrifice, and to render thoroughly effectual and successful by his Intercession at God's right hand in Heaven. Wherefore as *Manoah's* Wife reasoned when her Husband had dreadful apprehensions of the Majesty of God, who had appeared to them: and concluded they should die, *Because they had seen God; No* (saith she) *if God intended*

*Judg. 13.
23.*

tended to destroy us he would not have appeared to us, or much less have accepted a Sacrifice at our hands: So assuredly if God had not great compassion to mankind, and did not design to accept them upon repentance, he would never have given his own Son to be a Sacrifice for sin. Can any man suspect that God is indifferent whether men be saved or no, when he hath sent his Son to save them? Can any man imagine him implacable towards those whose nature he sent his Son to assume, and thereby to make an union betwixt the divine and humane Natures? Will any man think him inexorable to sinners who pitied them, healed them, conversed with them, and died for them? Let Devils despair who have not only no promise, and no Saviour, but nothing pitiable in their case; having had (1.) no tempter to abuse them, (2.) no flesh or body to clog them, (3.) no infirmity to extenuate their presumption, they are without hope, and therefore incapable of repentance, and so go on eternally to hate and blaspheme the God that will not pardon them. But there is no cause Man should do so, who as he hath all the arguments of pity in his case, so hath all the assurances of pardon from God upon his repentance.

To say no more, the very constant experience of all Ages, and the common sense of all Mankind, leaves us without all doubt that this method of repentance pacifies the Almighty; insomuch that when he hath most express his angry resentments, and seems to have been most peremptory and decretal in his threatnings, yet all but mad and desperate persons have encouraged themselves to hope for impunity upon repentance, even then when there hath not been the least intimation of any such condition in his denunciations: for thus when the Prophet

Jonas

Jonas had from the mouth of God proclaimed expressly, *Yet forty days and forty nights and Nineveh shall be destroyed*; Notwithstanding the absoluteness of the sentence, and the nearness of the execution, the *Ninevites* were not out of hope, but that if repentance were interposed, their ruine might yet be prevented; and it succeeded accordingly with them; for as they believing God's Word by the Prophet, expected nothing but sudden destruction if they had not repented, so they trusting in the goodness and exorableness of the Divine Majesty upon repentance, applied themselves seriously thereto, and were preserved.

Wherefore saith the relenting sinner, "Forasmuch as although I know not the limits of the Divine Mercy, yet this I know that nothing can set limits thereto but his own wisdom; and he is never so straitned but that if the case be pitiable, and he see reason of mercy, he can shew it; consistently with his Justice; here I will cast Anchor, I will endeavour to render my self an object of mercy, and trust upon his goodness; I never yet heard that any Man miscarried in this Bottom, or that a Penitent was cast away. I have often heard that God would have saved Men, but they would not; but I never heard of any that resorted penitently to his mercy and were rejected, nor do I think that Hell it self can furnish one instance of the Man that can upbraid God's goodness, and say, *I would but God would not.* Thus the consideration of the Divine Nature is everlastingly pregnant of encouragements to repentance, and is the spring of all motion to Godward; were it not for which, never any had been reclaimed from a course of sin, or begun a reformation. But so much of that.

Judg. 7.

2. In the Second place another encouragement to this penitent resolution (we are speaking of) is an apprehension that it is not impossible to become perfectly new men, notwithstanding our pre-engagements in the ways of sin. Opinion of absolute impossibility (as we have noted before) is equal to real impotency, checks all motion, nips all endeavour in the very bud, stifles and lays asleep all the powers of the mind. But hope and apprehension of feasibility spirits all industry, actuates all faculties, raises the spirits, and is the spring of all the great actions in the World. Some daring Men have effected things beyond their own expectations, but no brave exploit was ever performed by such as despaired of accomplishing it ; nor was ever any force defeated that did *prælibare victoriam*, and resolve to Conquer. When once a conceit had possessed the *Midianites* that they should be Conquered by *Gideon's Army*, (though grounded only upon an odd dream of a brown Loaf tumbling down upon their Tents,) their hearts presently melted in them, their spirits were emasculated, and a mighty Host became an easie prey to the inconsiderable numbers which *Gideon* led against them. And the Lord of Hosts would never suffer *Israel* to be led on to the Conquest of the Land of *Canaan* so long as the rumour of *Giants* and *Anakims* and walled Cities ran in the minds of the people ; nor until they were brought to a confidence that they were able to conquer that good Land. In like manner if the sinner think either his sins too great to be forgiven, or that it is too late to mend ; *i. e.* either despair of God's grace or of his mercy, he is utterly lost indeed ; that therefore which puts him forward upon resolution

lution is an apprehension that *God's grace is sufficient for him.*

The returning Prodigal saith, " It is true, I find I have gone a great way from my Father's House, and wearied my self with my own wanderings, yet sure it is not impossible but I may reach home again. And I, saith the sinner, have gone a great way towards my own undoing, having indulged my passions, and dethroned my reason, enslaved my will, weakned all my powers, and hardened my own Conscience by a long course and custom of sin; yet (in the words of holy Job) *There is hope of a tree if it be cut down that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease; though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground, yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant;* Job 14. 7, 8, 9. Though I have weakened my powers, yet I am a man still; though I have destroyed my self, yet there is hope in the God of Israel, and his hand is not shortened that he cannot save.

Tully is reported to have affirmed repentance to be impossible; namely, for a Man to retrieve himself, and take up a new course contrary to that to which he hath been long habituated: and no doubt it is very difficult so to do, as may sufficiently appear, both by what we have said already, and also by that of the Prophet, Jer. 13. 23. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.* Where the Holy Ghost intimates inveterate custom to be equal to nature it self, and accordingly we find by too sad experience, that there are very few that do *exuere hominem*, shake off the

*Last lib. 6.
de vero
Culcitra
such a pas-
sage out of
Tully's
Third Book
of Aca-
demies;
which is
lost.*

yoke of custom; *Facilis descensus Averni, Sed revocare gradus, &c.* And upon this account it is, that the conversion of old sinners is called a New Birth, and a New Creation, in the language of Holy Scripture. Notwithstanding, as our Saviour said of rich men, *That it was harder for a Camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for such a man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; yet to prevent mistakes, adds, *With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible*: So it is in this case, He can cause dry bones to live; and of Stones raise up Children to Abraham. The Holy Spirit can awaken those powers that were in a dead sleep; Conscience is not so callous but it may be rendered soft and sensible again; the will and other faculties of Men, though they are perverted, yet are not extinct; and being stirred up by the grace of God may exert themselves in a new strain, oppose their old customs, and introduce new habits.

Ἀνθρώποις
τὸ ἔστι
τὸ ἐναντίον
τῷ θεῷ
πρὸς τὸς

σφοδρικῶς λέγουσι, πῶς λογικῶς καὶ τὴν ἐν τύπῳ γυμνασίαν ἀπειθῶν·
πρὸς τὰς δὲ περὶ γυμνασίων πειρασιὰς τὰς περὶ τῶν ἐναντίων καὶ
περὶ τῶν ἑαυτῶν δὲ. *Arriani Epist. lib. 1. c. 27.*

As custom bore down and overgrew Nature formerly, so new customs may supplant the old ones, and make a new Nature. It is a well-known Story that when *Zopyrus* (a great pretender to the skill of reading men's temper and inclination in their countenances) had pronounced of *Socrates* that he was a lewd and intemperate man; the Company, who knew well the remarkable vertue of *Socrates*, laughed the cunning man out of countenance, till *Socrates* relieved him, saying, that indeed his inclination was naturally such as *Zopyrus* had pronounced; but that Philosophy and the culture and care of himself had altered him to what he was.

But

But the Holy Scriptures as they contain both more excellent institutions of virtue and holiness than all Philosophy, and more effectual methods of reclaiming and recovering men from vice and debauchery; so in the History thereof, they afford us the most frequent and most remarkable instances of such conversions. In the Old Testament we have *Manasses* who was an Idolater, a Witch, and did evil in the sight of the Lord above all the abomination of the *Amorites*, (who seem to have been the most profligate people in the world) and yet became at last a true penitent, a holy and a virtuous person. In the New Testament, to omit *St. Paul*, who saith of himself, that from a blasphemer, a persecutor, and the chief of sinners, he became an exemplary Christian, and a zealous Apostle and Preacher of the Doctrine which before he destroyed; We have great numbers of the most obstinate and wicked *Jews* converted, and no less of *Romans*, *Corinthians*, *Ephesians*, and of all other Cities and Countries who had grown old and hardened in a course of sin, but became new and holy men. Particularly the Apostle assures us of the *Corinthians*, That they had been Fornicators, Idolaters, Adulterers, Effeminate, Thieves, Covetous, Drunkards, And yet were washed, were sanctified, were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10, 11.

2 King. 21.

Non dabit arbor mala fructus bonos, si non inferatur; & bona malos dabit, si non colatur. Et lapides filii Abraham fient si in fidem Abraham convertantur, & ge-

nimina viperarum fructum penitentiae facient, si venena malignitatis expuerint, hac est vis divinae gratiae, potentior utique natura, habens in nobis subjacentem sibi liberi arbitrii potestatem, qua cum sit & ipsa naturalis & mutabilis, quoque vertitur, natura convertitur. Tertul. de Anima c. 21.

“ It is not therefore impossible (saith the sinner) but I may also recover my self out of the snares

“ of the Devil ; I found it in my power to chuse
 “ evil, why may I not hope to be able to chuse
 “ good ? nothing determined or necessitated me
 “ heretofore to sin, why may I not then cast off
 “ the yoke of custom, and by the grace of God
 “ apply my self to my duty ? This is a second con-
 sideration which inflames the Penitent to a resolu-
 tion of amendment ; which when he hath in ear-
 nest entred upon, he finds

3. As his third inducement, not only to be pos-
 sible, but also easie ; at least, far beyond what he
 heretofore imagined. It was perhaps not an exte-
 nuating but a just reflection which the Historian
 makes upon all the famous exploits of *Alexander*
 the Great, in *Asia* and in the *Indies*, which had
 swelled his name to such a bulk, *Primus ausus est*
vana contemnere, that it was not so much his more
 than humane courage or conduct which gaye him
 those successes, but that he had the luck or the sa-
 gacity, to see through and despise the pageantry
 and empty shew of force and formidableness which
 those soft and luxurious Nations were only fur-
 nished with. So it is in this case, he that can but
 once despise those *Ludibria oculorum*, those scare-
 crows and phantastical Ideas, which mens own fear
 and cowardise represent to them : he will presently
 find the business of Religion easie and expedite,
 and that it is but resolving generously, and the
 thing is done.

The way of vertue, though through the folly
 of men it be an unfrequented path, yet is it no sad
 and uncomfortable way ; no man abridges himself
 the delight of life by becoming vertuous, no just
 contentment is denied him ; no power, or so much
 as passion he hath, that is altogether denied its
 proper satisfaction: There is no inhumane auste-
 rity

ity required of us, no contradiction to our reason, or violence to our nature imposed upon us. God is no hard *Pharaoh* that seeks to break us with *bitter bondage, requiring the tale of bricks without straw*. He doth not bid us continue in the fire and not burn, or require us to converse with the occasions of sin, and escape the pollution; but only to moderate our desires, to mind our selves, to set our intentions right; and in a word, to resolve to do what we can, both to avoid the occasion, and to escape the infection.

And as for that Bug-bear Custom, why may we not break the fetters of our own making, and dissolve an habit of our own beginning? Sin it self was weak and timorous, and bashfull at first; but it got strength by time, and by degrees, and in the same manner it is to be supplanted; oppose beginnings of good to beginnings of evil, and an habit will be obtained, and we shall confront one custom with another; *He that goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, and bringing his sheaves with him.*

The way of vertue is therefore easie because it is recommended by our own reason, though sense oppose it for the present, let us be true to the former, and the latter must and will give way. A Law enacted by our own consent uses to find a ready and chearfull compliance, that which is voted within us, and carried by the free suffrage of our minds, surely can never be accounted harsh and difficult: and such are all the laws of vertue; the rules thereof are convenient for the community, suitable to our own natures, and as fit for us to consent to, as for God to enact.

All the opposition which the Devil or the flesh can make to the determination of our minds will

quickly cease if we stand firm to our selves; reason is as able to restrain sense, as that is to bewitch and fascinate our minds; or at least if we stop our Ears we shall avoid all its charms, *charm it never so cunningly*. Besides, all the importunities of the flesh will from such time as they begin to be denied, grow sensibly weaker and weaker. And for the Devil there is nothing so much encourages his attempts as our irresolution and feeble opposition; he is both a more proud, and a more cunning enemy than to endure too many repulses without hopes of success. He knows well enough he cannot force us, and if he cannot corrupt us, will not long labour in vain. This the Apostle St. James assures us of, *Resist the Devil and he will flee from you*, Saint James 4. 7.

John 3.
S. Joh. 3.8.
S. Luke
11. 13.

Above all, the Holy Spirit of God will not fail to set in with us, and make all easie to us, if we cease to resist and quench his motions. How that worketh in and upon us is not easie to discover: for *As the wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but knoweth not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit*: notwithstanding we are assured that God will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask it; and that that Spirit hath a mighty influence upon us without doing any violence to us, and that its aids are incomparably greater than the Devil's opposition; *For greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world*: and this is our great encouragement to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, because God worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Joh. 4. 4.
Phil. 2. 13.

The mischief of all is therefore our want of resolution, that we do but dally and trifle in this great business: and hence all the difficulty arises.

Quo minus timoris eo minus formè periculi. Cowards run the greatest dangers in War, and irresolute Men find the most opposition, and the greatest difficulty in a course of vertue. Did we but collect our selves, we should quickly find the face of things altered, and all discouragements vanish.

" All this methinks is plain (saith the Penitent)
" and I am resolved to make experiment of it,
" for I am not out of hopes, considering the pre-
" mises, and especially the promise of my Savi-
" our, that I shall find his yoke easie, and his bur-
" den light; and that I may do his commandments
" and not find them grievous.

4. But the last and greatest inducement of resolution is yet behind, and that is an apprehension of absolute necessity; that whether it be easie or difficult, it must be done. It is a well-known say-

ing of Pythagoras, *Δυναμὶς θανάτου ἐγγυὴρ νείη*, *Pythag.*
That power dwells next door to necessity: For as *Aurea Carmina.*
Hierocles expounds it, *Ἐκαστὸς ἐν οὐρανῷ ἀνάδυσθαι*, *Hierocl.*
When necessity lies upon a man, it makes him confess an *in Aurea*
Carmina.
ability he would not acknowledge before; it puts his

powers as it were upon the rack, and extorts those
secrets of nature which flesh would have concealed.
Who knoweth not that we owe to necessity most of the rarest discoveries and greatest improvements in all Arts and Sciences; and all Histories observe what great achievements this hath been Author of. Pursuant whereof those who have conduct of great affairs, make it usually their care to put those which they make use of as instruments in their enterprizes, under as quick apprehensions of necessity as they can possibly, by that means to sharpen their resolution. And on the contrary, endeavour to keep their Enemies and those they conflict with,

from

from necessity, as being loth to experiment the efficacy of it against themselves.

So it is in the present case, so long as an old inveterate sinner can find any refuge, he scarcely ever applies himself to repentance; but when having considered, he finds himself reduced to extremity, that this must relieve him or nothing; then and not till then he earnestly applies himself to it, as *ad sacram Anchoram, to his last and only remedy.*

“ For (saith the sinner) I cannot stand at the Bar
 “ of God's Justice, my appeal therefore must be
 “ to his Mercy, and there can be no room for
 “ that but upon terms of submission and repen-
 “ tance; either God must change, or I must re-
 “ solve either to change or perish. I have gone
 “ astray to the very brink of Hell, and it is un-
 “ reasonable to expect God should fetch me back
 “ by irresistible power, since he hath no need of
 “ me, and therefore I must seek him in the way in
 “ which he will be found. It is in vain to trust to
 “ his absolute and secret decrees, against the tenour
 “ of his known laws; or to hope that notwith-
 “ standing all my former miscarriages, and my
 “ present impenitency added to them, my name
 “ may be written in the Book of Life. Since
 “ God is a righteous Judge, and will without re-
 “ spect of persons render to every man according to
 “ his doings. What shall I then do? If I perse-
 “ vere in my old course, adding sin to sin, I make
 “ my case daily worse, *treasuring up wrath against*
 “ *the day of wrath;* and if I sit still, my neglect
 “ will as certainly ruine me as my sin. Whilst I
 “ delay the remedy, I cannot adjourn my own de-
 “ struction; for *the judgment stumbereth not.* Shall I
 “ hope time may extricate me out of these diffi-
 “ culties? Alas, that will aggravate them, and
 “ whilst

“ whilst I delay I perish. It cannot be now too soon to set about it : because I know not how soon it may be too late : Nor will I be fooled with that suggestion that it is now too late, for I am sure if I do it not now, the time will come when I shall wish I had done it ; and if it be too late now, it will be more so hereafter. Especially this would be the highest aggravation of my misery, if I should wholly abandon my self, and move nothing at all towards my own recovery. All other ways are beset with insuperable difficulties ; there is but one way of hope, and this is it : *Ancep: remedium potius quam nullum*, therefore whatever the success be, this I am resolved to make trial of.

Thus the four Lepers who were without the Gates of Samaria, when the Famine was within, and the Enemy laying close Siege round about it, If (say they) we stay here we die, and if we go into the City, the famine is there, and we die also. Let us therefore venture upon the Camp of the Syrians, if they kill us we can but die ; and if they spare us, we shall live. So the sinner, “ I am beset with difficulties, within are fears, without is despair ; Hell and damnation are round about me ; there is but one plank of escape, and that is Repentance, whether I can effect it, or God will accept it from me is a question : but hope is as cheap as despair ; if it be lost labour, it is but labour lost ; and the most doubtfull experiment is better than certain damnation.

Thus, by all these powerfull inducements the sinner is brought at last to a resolution, and that brings him to actual returning, as we shall shew by and by.

C H A P. III.

Of Confession and Contrition.

THE CONTENTS.

§. I. *Contrition consists of four parts. 1. Confession of Guilt. 2. Aggravation of the fault. 3. Self-Condernation. 4. Deprecation. All which are explained.*

§. II. *The efficacy of Contrition demonstrated. 1. As doing right to God's Sovereignty. 2. To his Wisdom, Justice and Goodness. 3. To his Omniscience. 4. To his Holiness and Purity. 5. It gives the best security against relapses into sin.*

§. I. **I**N the foregoing Chapter we left the Prodigal in a good mind, and well resolved what course to take; now therefore no doubt we shall find him putting in practice those ingenuous purposes. And taking the whole series of this part of the Parable together, our Saviour represents him as wholly taken up with these two things. First, in a contrite and remorsefull confession of his former offences. Secondly, in the actual returning to his Father, and to his duty; for as on the one hand (considering his former miscarriages) he could not take the confidence to appear before his injured Father without ingenuous shame and sorrow; so on the other side, he could neither content his own mind, nor hope for pardon from his Father without real amendment and actual reformation. Wherefore he joyns both together, that by the former, (*viz.*) his Contrition, he may appease his Father's just wrath and indignation; and that by the latter, (*viz.*) Reformation.

Reformation, he may be re-instated in his favour. Now the first of these is answerable to, and that which is most genuinely meant by the Greek word *μεταμέλεια* and the second, that which they express by the other word *μενώσια*: both which together make up the intire nature of true Repentance, and therefore must be handled by us particularly.

To begin with the former, (*viz.*) Contrition. The Son expresses himself thus, *Father I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son. Make me but as one of thy hired Servants, &c.* In which words there are these four things observable.

1. His confession of Guilt, *I have sinned.*
2. Aggravation of the fact, *I have sinned against Heaven and before thee.*
3. The severe judgment he passes upon himself, *I am no more worthy to be called thy Son.*
4. Lastly, His deprecation, *Yet make me as one of thy hired Servants.* All which deserve a little consideration, the rather because we shall find them all exactly and literally exemplified in the true Penitent.

1. Then the Son assumes to himself his own guilt, and takes shame to himself. *I have sinned, &c.* *Non in aetatem, non in malos consiliarios culpam rejicit, sed nudam parat sine excusatione Confessionem,* (saith the excellent *H. Grotius.*) He excuses not himself by the injudiciousness of his youth, nor casts the blame upon his evil Counsellors; neither accuses God nor man, but himself by a plain and ingenuous acknowledgment.

In like manner the true Penitent knows it is to no purpose to play the Hypocrite with God, Because all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. He seeth not as man sees,
beholding

beholding the outward appearance ; but he searches the hearts and tries the reins of the Children of men. He remembers that he that hideth his sins shall not prosper, but that he that confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy. Therefore with blushing and confusion of face, saith, I have sinned and done very foolishly. Thus the poor Publican is represented by our Saviour, *S. Luke 18. 13.* when as the Pharisee stood upon his own justification, and with a brazen impudence out-faces Heaven, *God I thank thee that I am not as other men are, &c.* He *standing afar off* (as not thinking himself worthy to approach so great a Majesty) *not daring to lift up his eyes to Heaven,* (as dejected with the apprehension of his own demerits) *smites upon his breast* with indignation against himself, and brings out only this contrite sigh, *God be merciful to me a sinner.* And so the Psalmist David in that penitential Psalm of his, *Psal. 51. vers. 3.* *I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my Mother conceive me, &c.* And this is the course of every Penitent, for though it be too true that Confession may be without true and compleat Repentance, yet it is impossible that Repentance should be true without Confession.

I enter not into a discourse of Confession to men, because my Text leads me not to it, further than as it concerns the person injured ; in which case it is often necessary for the satisfaction of our Consciences, and wherever there is any ingenuity in the offended person, it must needs be very prevalent towards his forgiveness. But as for the Divine Majesty, who is alway injured in every transgression, and can never have any reparation other-
wise

wise than by it, it must needs be always reasonable and necessary, as we shall shew more fully by and by.

2. But the Son contents not himself with a bare acknowledgment of his fault in general, but goes on to aggravate it, *I have sinned against Heaven and before thee.* If we consider the letter of those words, they import, I have sinned both against God and thee my Earthly Parent, for so the Jews were wont to express themselves, calling the Divine Majesty by the name of Heaven, as we may observe *S. Luk. 20. 4. The Baptism of John, was it from Heaven or of men, i. e. Was it of God's institution, or man's invention?* So also *1 Macc. 3. 18. It is all one with Heaven to save with few or with many, i. e. With the God of Heaven.* And we may easily take notice that in most of the Parables of our Saviour, that which is sometimes called the Kingdom of God, is otherwhile expressed by the name of the Kingdom of Heaven; and by both nothing else is meant but the Gospel, that divine institution of Religion: but if we attend to the intent of of this acknowledgment of the Prodigal Son, the words import an aggravation of his disobedience.

q. d. "There was no necessity lay upon me to transgress; thy Yoke was easie and reasonable, and therefore in disobeying thee, I disobeyed God too: Or I must first have cast off all reverence of God, before I could be undutifull towards thee. It was not the harshness and severity of my Father that drove me away, but my own levity and folly that betrayed me, and my stubbornness that I forsook him.

And the same consideration affects the heart of the Penitent: "For, (saith he) I have not only
"offended the Divine Majesty, but rebelled both
"against

“ against a rightfull and a gracious Sovereign ;
 “ have broken wise, and just, and equitable Laws ;
 “ been ingratefull towards him that had obliged
 “ me by infinite favours ; have slighted the most
 “ glorious propositions, and neglected the most
 “ gracious and condescending conditions of being
 “ happy. There was no invincible temptation up-
 “ on me, it was not in the power of example to
 “ debauch me : I was not oppress’d by fate, but have
 “ chosen my own destruction. It is not the Apo-
 “ stasy of *Adam* that can excuse me, for it was my
 “ own act : I cannot say, *the Fathers have eaten*
 “ *four grapes, and the Children’s teeth are set on edge :*
 “ for I sinned against light and Conscience with
 “ full consent, and against the motions of God’s
 “ Spirit to the contrary.

After this manner the Penitent is apt to lay load upon himself, no body can think or speak worse of him than he thinks and confesses of himself; so far is he from extenuating his crimes, that no malice can paint them worse, than grief and indignation at himself doth. In short, with *S. Paul*, he esteems himself *the chiefest and worst of sinners.*

Judices, erravit, lapsus est, non putavit, si unquam posthac : ad parentem sic agi solet. Ad Judices non fecit, non cogitavit, falsi testes sunt crimini, &c. Cic. Orat. pro Q. Ligario.

This is a quite contrary course to that which Men use to take when they plead at humane Tribunals, either they deny the fact, or extenuate, or justify it; either they plead ignorance, or pretend necessity, or prescribe for it from the custom and prevailing example of the world : but none of these ways are of use before God, and therefore are not the pleas of the Penitent. The Argument of the Psalmist (though it may seem a very strange one) is frequent with such men, *Psal. 25. 10. O Lord pardon my sin, for it is great. q. d. “ I am only*
 “ fit to magnify thy mercy, for I have sinned be-
 “ yond any mercy but thine ; my guilt is too great
 “ a bur-

" a burden for me to bear, if thy unspeakable mercies relieve me not. What shall I do unto thee;
 " *O thou redeemer of men?* Such a Soul is not only ashamed, but loaths and abhors himself; his Spirit is broken, his countenance dejected, his confidence dismounted, he feels pain and remorse, he goes heavily, he is pricked to the heart, and cries out in the anguish of his Soul, What shall I do?
 But,

3. He goes on not only to accuse, but to condemn himself also; "*I am not worthy to be called thy Son.* I deserve to be utterly abandoned; excluded your care, and cast out of your thoughts, as I cast my self out of your Family. And so the Penitent: I am so far, Lord, from deserving thy favour or eternal life, that I deserve not the least Crumb from thy Table; *less than the least of all thy mercies.* Nay I acknowledge I have deserved to go with sorrow to my grave; and to undergo the dreadfulest viols of thy wrath.

It is very remarkable that the Prodigal doth not only thus condemn himself whilst he anxiously stands expecting his doom from his Father, but even then when his Father had expressed compassion to him, had ran to meet him, and kissed him, for so ver. 21. we find him repeating his own condemnation in the same words as before: And in like manner we observe the Apostle S. Paul after he had obtained pardon, and the great favour of Apostleship, to be continually ripping up his former sins, and condemning himself for them; as if the wound bled afresh as often as it was touched.

Thus the Penitent always judges and condemns himself, that he may not be judged of the Lord. By
 P severity

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Penit.

severity towards himself he recommends himself to the Divine Mercy; for as *Tertullian* expresses it, *In quantum non pepereris tibi, in tantum Deus tibi parces.* If we like *Phineas* stand up and execute judgment, the Plague will be stayed. He that anticipates the day of Judgment by erecting a private, but impartial Tribunal, prevents the dreadfulness of that day. In short, if we be just, God will be mercifull; and therefore when the Penitent hath been accuser, witness and judge against himself, he may then with hopes of success become

4. In the fourth place Intercessour for himself also, and deprecate the divine displeasure, and implore his favour. So the Son doth here, *make me as one of thy hired servants.* *q. d.* Let me not be utterly cast out of thy Family, but have at least this instance of thy favour, that I may still retain some relation to thee. And so the Penitent now that he hath received his sentence of condemnation within himself, sues out his pardon. *O take not my confession merely as an argument of my guilt, but as an evidence of my contrition.* *Break not the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.* 'Tis thy prerogative, O Lord, to pardon, and what pleasure is there in my blood? Will the Lord be angry for ever? will his jealousy burn like fire? O consider my frame! remember I am but dust and ashes; call to mind thy mercies of old, thou art God and not man, and as much as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are thy mercies above the mercies of man. Turn thy face away from my sins, and blot out all my transgressions. Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit in me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from

from me. Give me the comfort of thy help again, and stablish me with thy free Spirit, &c. Psal. 51. 9, 10, 11, 12.

Saint Cyprian reports it to have been the Custom of the Primitive Penitents out of their quick and pricking sense of sin, and the more effectually to recommend themselves to the mercies of God, and the favour of his Church, earnestly to implore the Martyrs, that in the midst of their sufferings and sharpest agonies, they would remember them in their Prayers, thinking such affectionate intercession of those that poured out their blood and requests together, must needs be available both with God and man. But the Penitent addresses himself also to a higher and more prevalent Advocate, who adds the incense of his own sacrifice to the prayers of men, and makes them come up as sweet odours before the Almighty; and who is exalted at God's right hand to this end that he may give success to the prayers of such contrite persons. To which add, that not only the deep apprehensions of guilt and of danger which such a person (we now speak of) is under, must needs make him ardent and importunate, and to cry mightily to God; but also the Scripture assures us that the Holy Ghost is wont to assist *such with sighs and groans which are unutterable.*

§. II. Now for the acceptableness of this penitent confession of which we are speaking. Although it be certain that our Heavenly Father takes no delight in the pitifull moans, in the tears and lamentations of his Creatures, and is most true that he is not to be wrought upon by addresses and complemental forms, by the accent of Men's voice, by the rhetoric of tears, nor any thing of

that nature; because he is not subject to passions as men are: yet having demonstrated already in the former Chapter that the Divine Majesty hath no restraint upon him but what himself pleases, and that all his actions towards his Creatures are so subject to his wisdom, that when-ever there is just cause for mercy, he can shew it notwithstanding the unchangeableness of his Nature, the rigour of his Laws, or the demand of his Justice; if now we also make it appear from his own mouth, and from those discoveries which he hath been pleased to make of himself, that the aforesaid humble and contrite addresses are agreeable to the designs of his wisdom, and therefore required by him as the conditions of pardon; then there can be no doubt but that they will in their kind be as acceptable to his Divine Majesty, and as successfull on the part of the sinner, as the penitent Son's submission was with his earthly Parent.

And this will be easily evident if we consider that whereas the evil of sin lies principally in the dishonour it reflects upon the divine perfections, such penitential acknowledgments as we have described, do in great measure repair that injury, and do right to all the Divine Attributes, as we will instance in particular.

1. Sin is an invasion of God's Authority and Sovereignty over us, inasmuch as he that wilfully breaks any Law of God proclaims himself *sui juris*, or *Lawless*, and saith with those in the Gospel, *we will not have this Lord to rule over us*. Now penitent acknowledgment though it cannot recall the act which is past, yet it revokes and retracts the affront, and settles God's Authority again.

2. Sin is an impeachment of God's wisdom, justice and goodness at once; for he that allows himself

self in the commission of a sin, lays an imputation upon God, as if he had either not fore-seen what liberty was fit to be allowed to his Creatures, or had not ordered the frame and constitution of things with that decency and benignity that mankind could comfortably acquiesce in, without temptation to intrench upon that for his own necessary accommodation. Now on the contrary, confession takes shame and folly, and unreasonableness to our selves, and justifies the wisdom and equity of all God's constitutions. In this sense we may take that expression, *Luke 7. 29. The Publicans justified God, being baptized with the Baptism of John, i. e.* They entering into a penitential state which *John's* Baptism initiated them into, condemned themselves, and proclaimed the righteousness of God's methods.

3. Sin is a tacit denial of God's Omniscience; the sinner saith with them in the Psalmist, *Tush, doth God see, and is there knowledge in the most High?* *Psal. 73. 11.* And with those other in *Job, How doth God know, can he judge through the dark Clouds? Thick Clouds are a covering to him that he seeth not, and he walketh in the Circuit of Heaven,* *Job 22. 13, 14.* Either they conclude with the *Epicureans* that it is below the Majesty of God to mind the affairs of men, or that it would create him too much trouble and business, or some odd conceit or other they may well be presumed to have, who dare adventure to sin, forasmuch as the consideration of an All-seeing Eye would give the most curbing check to sin that can be. And indeed, this Attribute is one of the most glorious perfections of the Divine Nature; and so necessary that it is not intelligible how he should be God, that is, how he should govern the world for the

Baruch 2.
18.

present, or judge it hereafter, without it: and consequently it is (if not the only foundation, yet) the immediate obligation to all worship and religious observance. For suppose a God, as the *Epicureans* did, that either could not, or would not mind the actions of men, and make him otherwise as great, excellent and adorable as we will, yet will it be impossible to restrain men from hypocrisy and contempt of him whilst they are under no apprehensions that their actions and carriage towards him are eyed by him. Now he that ingenuously confesses his sin, and takes shame to himself for it, doth honour to this Divine Perfection, and upholds the Pillar of the World, and thereby recommends himself to the Divine mercy.

It was the saying of *Joshua* to *Achan*, *Jos. 7. 9. My Son give glory to God, and confess thy fault. q. d. Thou hast dishonoured God by thy sin, and both reproached his wisdom in making such a Law, and also called in question his Omniscience by thy daring to violate it: now therefore make him the best amends thou canst by an ingenuous confession, and make it appear, that though when thou wast tempted to do wickedly, thou wert so foolish as to promise thy self security; yet now upon more deliberate thoughts, thou acknowledgest there is nothing can hide thee from him.*

4. Such acknowledgments as aforesaid, do right to the holiness and purity of God: for thereby the sinner expressing his shame, and blushing at his own impurity, seems to loath himself for his unlikeness to the Divine Majesty, who is the chief and original perfection.

To which add in the last place, that besides that in this confession of sin, the sinner places himself

in the nearest posture, and under the very eye of God, and the quickest apprehensions of him, and the greatest awefulness of his Majesty; he also puts a brand and odious mark upon all sin, and by his thus suffering for sin in the sense of his Soul condemns sin in the flesh; and withall expresses a great distast of it, shews an abhorrence, a mind alienated from it, and so consequently by that sense of the bitterness of it, gives the best security against relapses into it again. Upon all which it is not untruly said, *quem penitet peccasse, pœnè est innocens*; and though it be best of all not to sin, yet he is in a good degree towards innocency, who is thus penitent for his offences; and consequently in a fair way for pardon.

With respect to which the Psalmist who both could and would (if that would have done as well) have brought the most costly Sacrifices to God to have atoned his sin, and made his peace with him, yet pronounces *the Sacrifice of God to be only a contrite Spirit, and that a broken and contrite Spirit God would not despise*. Those other Sacrifices it seems though God permitted them, and in some cases accepted, yet were not of his institution at first, only they were ways which men thought apt to express their homage and dependance upon God, or by which to acknowledge their gratitude; or by the cost of them to impose a mulct upon themselves for offending, or otherwise by being converted to the use of those that attended immediately upon him, might be supposed to be a means to propitiate him towards them; as if in the language of our Saviour men sought this way to make to themselves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness: Notwithstanding in themselves all those costly oblations seemed to reflect dishonour upon

God; as representing him a necessitous and indigent Deity; for which cause several of the wisest and best Philosophers of old forbid all costly Sacrifices, and required only such things as might properly be reputed *μακρὸν τὸ ἀνθρώπινον εἶναι*, (as the Platonists express it) i. e. *the worship of a full and perfect Being*: and such especially is this of a broken and contrite heart, which as it is that which every man hath to give that will, so is fittest to be the sacrifice of all mankind to the common Father of them; and as it cost them least, so it doth the truest honour to him.

And whereas *Paganism* admitted no repentance, and in their Philosophick writings we meet often with expiations, and lustrations, but no such thing as repentance; the reason must be because they had no right notions of God, commonly considering him only under the notion of rigid fate, or of absolute sovereignty, without any apprehension of benignity or compassion in him: which whose rightly understands God, must needs conceive to be in him in an eminent degree, as we have shewed before; and he that so considers him, can have no reason to doubt but those instances of penitence we are now upon, are very acceptable to him, especially if they come attended with real reformation, which we come now in the next place to speak of, as the second part of the Penitent's Resolution, and the last and principal point of Repentance.

CHAR.

CHAP. IV.

Of Actual Returning, or Reformation.

The CONTENTS.

Actual Reformation consists in three things. 1. Care of God's Worship. 2. Conscience of all his Commands. 3. Submission to his Providence. All which are described according to such measures as are practicable in themselves, necessarily required by God, and conscientiously observed by all true Converts.

WE have hitherto in the letter of the Parable seen the (formerly extravagant) Son performing the first part of his resolution, confessing his fault, condemning his folly, falling at his Father's feet, and imploring his pardon. But there was something else meant when he said, *I will return to my Father*; and he was not ignorant that filial reverence and obedience for the future, was the best Apology for his former transgressions: for though he knew how great an interest the very relation of a Son gives in the affections of a Father, and albeit the saying of the Apostle is especially and most remarkably verified in the charity of Parents, that it *beareth all things, hopeth all things, believeth all things*; for they readily believe well of their Children, because they so passionately desire it should be so: notwithstanding, the Son could not think his Father so soft and easy as to be imposed upon with words and ceremonies, and himself was not now so ill-natured as to go about to abuse

abuse so much goodness, if it had been in his power. Wherefore the Text saith, *verf. 20. So he arose and came to his Father, i. e.* he did not only change his note, his address, his countenance, but he changed his course; he returned to his Father, and to the duty of a Son.

And we have under this type (in the former part of it) seen described the preface and introduction to repentance towards God; namely the sinner bewailing his sin, taking shame to himself, under agonies of mind, pricked to the heart, humbly imploring the divine favour, and crying earnestly for mercy. But this is not all that repentance means, the principal part of it is yet behind, (*viz.*) Actual Reformation. This is that which every awakened Conscience in its agonies promises and resolves upon; this God expects, and every sincere Convert really performs: for without this all the rest is but empty pomp and pageantry, and meer hypocrisy, as we shall shew anon. But when this is added to the former, such a person from thenceforth is a new man, and in a new estate; he hath compleatly made his return to God, as the Son in the Text is said to have actually returned to his Father.

I have noted heretofore, that all irreligion and profaneness is wont in the language of the Scripture to be expressed by the phrase of *departing from God, or going out from him, or forsaking him*; and so the whole practice of Religion is contrariwise set forth by *drawing nigh to, or coming to God*; particularly *Heb. 11. 6. ~~tegarjauw~~ ^{tegarjauw} ~~to~~ ^{to} God, he that cometh to God, &c.* he that becomes a Profelyte to Religion, (for from thence doth that word Profelyte take its original.) Wherefore now we will first observe what is implied by this phrase of

of the Son's returning or coming to his Father; and in proportion thereto describe this most important business of the Penitent's returning to God, which is his Actual Conversion or Reformation: and in the former these three things seem plainly to be comprehended.

1. That the Son now returns home to his Father's family and presence.
2. That he returns to the duty of a Son, by obedience and compliance with his Father's commands.
3. That he submits to his Father's government and provision.

Therefore in the latter, namely, conversion to God, these three things must seemably be implied.

1. That the Penitent puts himself under the eye of God, and lives in a constant practice of piety and devotion.
2. That he frames himself to universal obedience to all God's commands.
3. That he gives himself up to the divine disposal, and intirely submits to his providence and government.

1. Concerning the first of these, there is nothing more evident or remarkable to all experience and observation, than the great fervor of devotion in all true Converts, from an evil life; insomuch that there is not that Man to be found under such a character, but presently with great solemnity and seriousness he sets up the worship of God; to which purpose we find in the History of the Acts of the Apostles, *Σεβόμενοι*, *Worshippers*, or *Devout persons*, to be the common name by which Converts to Religion

V. Mede, disc. 3. in Act. 17 4.

gion are expressed; and these, *Acts* 13. 48. are said to be *Τίταυδοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον*, *Candidates of eternal life*, or put into order and disposed for salvation. Compare *vers.* 43. with 48. More particularly it is observable of *S. Paul*, that when for a superstitious Pharisee and bitter Enemy of Christianity, he was reclaimed and made a Christian; the assurance that God gives to *Ananias* of the truth of his conversion, is *Acts* 9. 11. *Behold he prays*. And so of *Manasses*, *2 Chron.* 33. 18. amongst the instances of his real reformation the Scripture takes especial notice of the prayer that he prayed.

And this is so universal a truth, that I think from hence it cometh to pass that those who have a mind Hypocritically to put on the guise and appearance of Religion, are wont to be notably careful in this point: for so the Pharisees cloaked all their Villanies with this garb of Piety. Now Hypocrisy would miss altogether of its design if it did not resemble the truth of things; and usually their over-solicitude and over-doing herein betrays them to act a part only in Religion.

But it is not only the duty of Prayer which the true Penitent expresses his Conversion by, (though this be by some too Phantastically called *Duty*, as if all Piety consisted in that only,) for as the literal Prodigal returns to his Father's House and Family, so the mystical returns to God's House which is his Church, and associates himself with God's Servants in all the offices of Religion: (*viz.*) in hearing the word, reading, meditation, Sacraments, &c. Now he thinks a day spent in God's Courts better than a thousand; and had rather be a door-keeper in the house of the Lord, than to dwell in the tents of the wicked. This one thing he desires of the Lord, and is most passionate in, that he may dwell

dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his Temple. And he so highly values the privilege of God's Church, that no private opinion, no trifling scrupulosity, nor petty disgust, shall ever alienate him from it. Here he finds himself fortified and encouraged by the great examples of holy men, his Prayers strengthened by the concurrence of all good people; here he is under the publick dispensations of the means of grace and knowledge, the very plainness and simplicity of which he now with the great Convert *S. Austin* values and admires more than all the Greek or Roman Eloquence of Speech, or subtilty of Philosophy; to which every thing else seemed flat and insipid before. Above all, the holy Sacrament puts him into an extasie; in this he thinks himself in God's presence in an extraordinary manner, and admitted a guest at his Table, the Crums of which he thinks himself unworthy of: here he refreshes his hungry Soul with the Bread of Life, and his wounded Conscience by the Bloud of his Crucified Saviour; and in both he thinks he sees his provoked, but compassionate Father, stand with open Arms to receive him. This he approaches with great reverence, with shame and sorrow for his sins past, together with faith and hope in God's mercy, and will therefore never be negligent of it.

In these and all other duties of Religion, both publick and private, the Convert expresses such an excellent spirit, and extraordinary zeal as cannot but be very observable; nay, his fervor is so great in these things, that the only danger is of running into some excess, lest he outgo the health and strength of his Body, and forget the necessity of the common affairs of life.

It

It is true, there is great diversity in these passionate expressions of devotion, according to the difference of men's tempers and constitutions; but yet in every true Convert, it is at the lowest quite another thing from the common flatness and formality that is too easy to be seen in other men: nay, the transports of this kind in new Converts are usually so great, that it often gives them occasion afterwards to question their station, and to doubt whether they have not apostatized and *fallen from their first love*; when they find they cannot maintain those Spring-tides constantly at the same height through the whole course of their lives. For the sake of which this is to be added; that it is no argument against a man's sincerity, that he wants some of the passionate expressions of devotion which he had at first, in regard then the fresh sense he had of his miscarriages, and of his horrible danger, together with the ravishing joy at the first glimpse of God's mercy in *Christ*, were able strangely to move all his powers, and to draw even those bodily passions into compliance with the sense of the mind which must certainly flag afterwards. And therefore though it be a sure sign he is no Convert, (I mean, from a debauched and wicked life) who had no experience of something extraordinary in this kind at first; yet on the other side, it is no sign of decaying in grace, if he find not the like all along.

2. But to proceed: Secondly, when the Son arose and went to his Father, it is implied, that he became obedient to his commands, as well as that he lived in his presence and Family. And accordingly the Penitent in the next place contents not himself with any or all of the forementioned acts of devotion; as not intending to put off God with comple-

complemental addressees, (for all worship without obedience is no better) but applies himself with all humility and seriousness to frame his life according to his commands. Heretofore he was a Son of Belial, lawless and disobedient, but now he saith with S. Paul upon his conversion, Acts 9. 6. *What wilt thou have me to do, Lord?* He hath now found what hard service the Devil puts his Vassals to, and having had so bad a Master of him, he doth not discourage himself with suspicions, but submits his neck to the yoke of Christ Jesus, and doth not say it is grievous, as being of opinion with the Falisci, who told Fabricius, *Mellius nos sub vestro imperio quam sub nostris legibus victuri sumus.* God's service is perfect freedom, and it is liberty enough to obey wisdom and goodness.

Livy, lib. 5.

Accordingly he endeavours from henceforth to live in all the statutes and commandments of the Lord blameless, and exercises himself to have a Conscience void of offence both towards God and man. He confines not his care to some one branch or part of his duty, which is the common guise of Hypocrites, but resolves to be universally good and holy: For he not only considers that one sin is sufficient to ruine a man as well as many, (as one disease may destroy a man's life as well as a complication) but also he observes, that the main difficulty of vertue lies in that men do not uniformly carry on the whole business before them, and so the Devil gets that ground in one place which he seems to lose in another. Besides, the very principle that acts and governs him is the hearty love of God and goodness, which makes him have an equal hatred to all sin, and a zeal of every duty.

He

He forsakes all his debauches for the pleasure of a good Conscience, and makes experiment whether victory over his passions be not as delightful as the gratification of them ; and whether intellectual joys be not as ravishing as sensual enjoyments ; and a regular conversation as easy and agreeable as the lawless and licentious. He brings his senses in subjection to his reason, and makes all those powers and faculties tributary to Religion which before made War against it. “ This head of mine (saith he) which was wont to be employed in contrivances for the World, or in catering for my lusts, shall now be exercised in studying how I may do most honour to my Maker. This wit which was wont to go out in froth, or in scoffing at all that was serious, shall now make Apologies for what before it blasphemed. This tongue shall learn to bless, that was used to cursing and swearing. My hands shall now dispense as liberally to charitable purposes, as they have sordidly raked together before ; I will be as exemplary for sobriety and chastity, as ever I was notorious for excesses ; and wherever I have wronged any body in my dealings, I will now spare from my self to make them a recompence. In short, by the grace of God from henceforward there is neither pleasure shall tempt me, nor profit allure me, nor ambition corrupt me, nor example sway me to do any thing which I know to be evil ; and on the other side, there shall neither difficulty discourage me, nor tediousness of the course weary me in the race of vertue and holiness.

And to the intent that he may always make good this ground, and persevere in this course, he calls in all the Auxiliaries of Divine Grace, places himself

himself under the most advantageous circumstances, and retrenches himself against all assaults or surprisals. Herewithall he hath a principal care to keep his thoughts pure and holy, that there may be no combustible matter in him for the Devil's fiery darts to take hold of, nor any beginning of a mutiny within him of the flesh against the spirit, by which means a passage may be opened to the Enemy. And yet when this is done he will be always upon his guard too, not trusting wholly to the innocency of his intentions, as knowing both the subtilty and enterprizing nature of the Devil. And that this watch may be constantly kept up, he is sure not to allow himself the least degree of intemperance which would at least weaken his reason, and inflame his passion: and farther, he is very choice of his company, and very desirous to fortifie himself by good neighbourhood and acquaintance, that he may be quickened by their examples: and lastly, he will be always doing some good thing or other, that temptation may not find him at leisure to give it entertainment.

Moreover, in consideration that he hath lived a great while unprofitably, and done far less than his duty, he will strive if it be possible to do more than is matter of express duty now to make amends for former failing, and therefore is far from the cold and frugal piety of those men that make a great stir in seeking the *minimum quod sit*, as if they would divide a hair in Religion, and be sure to do no more than needs must; and were afraid of loving God too much, or bidding too high for the Kingdom of Heaven: for though it be true

Q

that

Οι ἀνθρώποι
πολλοὶ πειράζονται
ἐν τῷ νόμῳ καὶ πειρᾷ;
καὶ τὸν δούλον τοῦ
καὶ ἀποβαίνειν τὰ
ἐκείνην S. Chrys.
ἐπὶ 12 Rom. 8.

Hereof
we have a
great in-
stance in
St. Paul,
1 Cor. 9. 16.
See also
Luke 17.
10.

that there are no works of supererogation, as some vainly speak, *i. e.* whereby we may make God a debtor to us, or that we shall have an overplus, and be able to contribute towards a publick stock besides our own necessity; yet if a man, conscious of his own many failings, shall therefore (to shew that notwithstanding he loves God sincerely) oblige himself, suppose to pray oftener, or give Alms more liberally than is expressly required of him, this sure will not be blameable.

And again, being heartily troubled for what evils he hath committed heretofore, he indeavours to retract and undo them as much as is possible, not only labouring to prevent the contagion of his example, but where the case will admit it, rescinding and nullifying the very effects. So *Manasses*, that had set up Idolatry, effectually reformed it; and *Zacheus*, besides the half of his goods which he gave to the Poor, made a four-fold restitution where-ever he had wronged any. The Jaylor washes the stripes he had inflicted, and *S. Paul* zealously preached the doctrine which before he persecuted

Lastly, Such is the indignation which the true Convert hath against himself for his former rebellions, and such an holy jealousy hath he over himself lest he should relapse, that he is in danger of another extremity; for whereas heretofore he too much indulged the humour of his Body, now he is ready to abridge it to such a degree as to endanger his health: perhaps in times past he lived in too much gaiety, and now so gravely that there is some danger his strictness should sour into austerity; heretofore he lived lawlessly, and now is ready by an *αυστερία τῆς ἀπολαύσεως*, a vehement inclining the contrary way to fall into scrupulosity, and in the

words

words of S. *Austin*, *Factum horretur licitum ob vicinitatem illiciti*, which I render by those of our Saviour, *He strains at a Gnat now, that was wont to swallow a Camel.*

Those that have had experience of new and zealous Converts, know this which I have last said to be too true, and therefore those that are concerned in the management of such persons, find it becoming their prudence, not only to instruct them in the holy ways of the Gospel, but also to interpret to them the liberty of the Gospel. For in defect of such care and prudence, it very often unhappily comes to pass, that evil men and seducers, working upon that well meant but intemperate zeal, find advantage of insinuating their curiosities, their superstitions, nay, their very morosities, and the distinctive Badges of their peculiar factions; and in consequence thereof both indispense these honest minds to some of that which is their duty in Church and State, and also render them uncomfortable in themselves, and scandalous to Religion.

But abating this last thing (which is a bad weed, but an argument of a good soil) all that which I have been saying otherwise, is in the temper and practice of every true Convert, as is most eminently to be seen in all the Primitive Christians, who were converted from Paganism or Judaism to *Christ Jesus*, but especially the former; the whole world saw them strangely improved and metamorphosed, to use the word of the Apostle, upon which account the Primitive Fathers, *Origen*, *Justin Martyr*, *Eusebius*, *Lactantius*, &c. gloried in the efficacy of the Gospel, and shamed the blind Pagans out of their contempt of it; they despised it for the plainness and familiarity of the phrase, but

*Non abscon-
dit vitia,
sed abscon-
dit. Lact.
13. cap 25*

could not deny but it was mighty in operation, far beyond all the admired writings of Philosophers; for whereas all the efficacy of them usually extended no further than to furnish men's heads with notions, or to gild the outside; this changed them thoroughly, made the Drunkard become grave, the lascivious person chaste and modest, the griping oppressor merciful and liberal; and in short, made the vicious and debauched become uniformly holy and virtuous. And this is the second thing intimated in the Son's returning to his Father, he returned to his duty and obedience. But,

3. Thirdly and lastly, when the Son returned to his Father, it is implied that he then submitted himself to his Father's providence and accommodations; that whereas heretofore the way of his Father's Family was too frugal and parsimonious for him, he must live at an higher rate, and be better provided for; and therefore desired to have his portion in his own hands, that he might please himself: now the case is altered, for he found that his prodigality had brought him to rags, and his riots to hunger, and the danger of being starved: this therefore had like to have broke his heart, but to be sure it hath broke his spirit; and now he will not capitulate, nor prescribe rules to his Father, but be content with any thing; *make me but as one of thy hired servants, &c.*

It was the custom of Penitents of old to put on Sack-cloth, and to sprinkle themselves with Ashes, as acknowledging themselves to be vile Earth, and unworthy of the meanest accommodations. And what was thus done Emblematically on the solemn times of humiliation, is really accomplished in every sincere Convert. He is sensible that (as we have discoursed heretofore) pride began his ruine, and

and therefore humility must recover him. Time was, that he swelled against God, as the proud waves against their banks, strove to break down and over-run all the restraints of Providence; because he could not bring his condition to his mind, therefore he swelled and murmured, raged and blasphemed: "why must he be poor and limited, "sick or of short continuance? why (since the "world was made for man) should not he have "his full swing, and like *Leviathan*, sport himself therein? He was ready to suspect some malevolent or evil genius goverhed the world, and not such a wise and benign Being as men talk of. In short, as the Laws of God were too strait, so was his Providence, and he could brook neither of them.

But as we have seen (upon this change) his compliance with the former, so we shall now see his conformity to the latter. He hath now like *Nebuchadnezzar*, been turned out to grass, till by his afflictions he was brought to acknowledge *that the most High ruleth in the Kingdoms of men*; and now the Clay hath learned not to dispute with the Potter, *why hast thou made me thus?* Now whatever condition it pleases God to put him in, he acknowledges it is better than he deserves; if he will that he be a Beggar, in disgrace, sickness, prison; where and what he pleases, so he have mercy upon his Soul. He hath learnt to say with *Jacob*, *Less than the least of all God's mercies*; and with the Israelites humbled by their captivity; *Thou always punishest us less than our iniquities have deserved*; or with the same in the Lamentations, *It is the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, and wherefore doth a living man complain, a man, for the*

Gen. 32.
10.

Q 3

punish-

punishment of his sins? He not only considers the irresistible power of God, and yields, as knowing there is no contending with him; but he acknowledges also his sovereignty, and the right which the great Creator of the world hath to dispose of him and all other Creatures as he pleases; and therefore quarrels not prerogative, but saith with old *Eli*, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*; and with the Psalmist, *I was dumb and opened not my mouth, for it was thy doing. q. d.* “ If I saw nothing but rigid fate
 “ overbearing me, though I knew it was even
 “ then to no purpose to contend, yet I should be
 “ tempted to repine at my hard fortune; but
 “ when I saw God in it, I laid my hand upon
 “ my mouth; for that word speaks wisdom, justice, and goodness, as well as power; every
 “ of which are infinitely above my match.
 “ And when I reflect upon my self, I cannot but
 “ discover, that it is not mere power and will in
 “ God that oppresses me, but it was just with
 “ him to appoint me this adversity; nay, I cannot but own his wisdom too in it; he understands my frame, and therefore is best able to
 “ judge what is good and necessary for me: *My heavenly Father knows what things I have need of*: And consequently I must conclude (since
 “ he hath ordered it so) that it was best for me
 “ that I should be put into the condition I am
 “ in: He saw I was not able to bear a full tide
 “ of prosperity, and therefore sent cross winds to
 “ check me; he foresaw I should be apt to luxuriate and run riot again, should he have planted
 “ me in the warm Sun, and therefore he made
 “ choice of the shade for me.

Upon

Upon all these considerations, and especially that which I first suggested; namely, his modest reflection upon his own demerits, and therewithall the contemplation of that transcendent happiness in another world, which will abundantly compensate all defects in this; the Penitent is brought intirely to surrender himself to the divine will. So that he doth not only patiently abide what he cannot help, but in some good measure of cheerfulness, harmoniously falls in with the divine providence. " I will (saith he) no longer have any
" will of my own *but thy will be done*: as I will
" endeavour to frame the course of my life and
" actions by thy Laws and revealed will; so my
" mind, my will and passions, shall be shaped in
" conformity to thy secret will.

This temper every true Penitent must and doth arrive at in good measure, for untill this be done, the principle of pride, which was the first spring of apostasie, is not destroyed in him; and it will be impossible that he should discharge the former part of active obedience, unless this passive frame be in conjunction with it; since a malecontent and murmuring spirit can never become a good and dutifull subject of God's Kingdom, because he plainly betrays that he neither loves nor reverences him, and therefore will not obey him. Besides, that most assuredly such a temper affords perpetual invitation and encouragement to the Devil to be attempting upon him to inflame him into some rebellion against God. Whereas the man that is contented with his condition, that submits to God, discourages Satan in all his attempts of stirring up sedition, he gives him no hold, he disarms and defeats him.

This therefore with the two former make up the summ of Religion, and consequently the intire character of a true Convert, and the just terms of his reconciliation with the offended Majesty of Heaven. By these three steps the Son recovered himself and his Father's favour. And thus the sinner returns to God.

CHAR.

C H A P. V.

Of the necessity of Actual Reformation.

T H E C O N T E N T S.

- §. I. *A recital of several loose opinions about repentance, which debauch men's practice in this important affair.*
- §. II. *Four arguments demonstrating the absurdity of all those opinions jointly, and the necessity of bringing forth such fruits of repentance as are described in the former Chapter. 1. From Scripture. 2. From the nature of God. 3. From the nature of Heaven and Hell. 4. From the nature of Conscience.*

WHilst in the foregoing Chapter I endeavour'd in three instances plainly and accurately to describe actual returning to God, as the condition of reconciliation with our Heavenly Father, as I think I out-went not the figurative intimations of the Parable, so I am most confident that therein I dealt faithfully with the Souls of all such Men as are concerned in that discourse; neither requiring more, nor admitting less than what is both fit for God to accept, and for men to yield to him: therefore it was reasonably to be hoped that Mens judgments being convinced herein, they would practise accordingly, and so I might proceed immediately to the third and last part of the Parable; and there shew the admirable success of this method, and the comfortable greeting betwixt the Father of Spirits and his returning Children.

Notwith-

Notwithstanding, partly because I am aware in the general how willing men are even to put a cheat upon themselves for a cheap and an easie cure; and that to such that which we have been discouraging will seem to be *durus sermo*, a hard Chapter, (as we say;) and partly also I am not ignorant that there are abundance of Mountebanks in Theology, who pretend to administer comfort to troubled Consciences upon far easier terms: that therefore I may wholly omit nothing that I conceive useful in this important affair, I will here (though briefly) demonstrate the truth and absolute necessity of what we have now laid down; but first I think it not amiss to take notice of the principal of those mistakes which make it necessary that I so do; and they may be reduced to these four heads.

Kimch. in
Isa. 59.

1. It was the opinion of some of the *Jewish* Doctors that when the *Messias* came, there would be no necessity of repentance at all, as if his intercession should perfectly excuse Men all the trouble of *working out their own salvation with fear and trembling*. And alike absurd conceit hath possessed some Christians, that nothing is to be done by us but trusting and relying upon *Christ Jesus*, and his sacrifice and satisfaction; as if he had not only satisfied for the transgressions of the old Covenant, but having brought in a new one, had set Men perfectly at liberty from all moral obligation; or as if it were a derogation from the merits of *Christ's* death that any thing should be required of us in order to justification. This is the doctrine of the *Antinomians*. Which some carry yet higher, and suppose justification from Eternity, founded meerly in the secret decree of God, and so not only exclude repentance, but even the mediation of *Christ Jesus* himself.

2. There

2. There is a second sort of Men, and those called Christians too, that require something on man's part though very little, and that they call *Attrition*, by which they mean some slight sorrow for sin, which they say together with the Sacrament of penance or confession, will reconcile a Man to God, without so much as contrition, or true and hearty sorrow for the evil of sin: This is the express doctrine of the Church of *Rome*, and is very like the common doctrine of the *Jews*, that confession and sacrifice were sufficient for repentance and reconciliation; as if sin had no great evil in it self, or no great contrariety to the divine nature, only for form or order sake he thought fit that some shame or mulct should be put upon it; and so a few tears, or something of no great moment, shall quit all the old score, and purchase a new licence to sin again.

C. Trent.
Sess. 4. Cap.
14.
Maim. in
Teshubba
apud
Lightf.
Hor. Hebr.

3. Another opinion goes further yet, requiring not only external expressions, and the forms and solemnities of repentance, but real and hearty sorrow for sin; that a man's Conscience be really troubled, and in great anguish for his sin; and when this is done, all is well; from such trouble of Conscience they date their conversion, and this they are always reflecting upon as a security, not only against the sins committed before it, but that from that time God sees no more sin in them; as if, like as it was at the Pool of *Bethesda*, when the Angel *had moved the waters, all that slept in were healed*. These Men ordinarily please themselves with melancholy complaints of themselves, cry out of a naughty heart, a hard heart, &c. and think this will do their business, as if so soon as the Patient is grown sensible of his case he were cured, and to feel the smart were all one as to have the sore healed.

Lastly,

Lastly, a fourth sort go further yet, and require not only contrition, but resolution of obedience; but content themselves, and incourage Men to a great degree of confidence, though this resolution be never put in execution. Thus a great many Saints are Canonized from the Gallows, and the *Clinick* or Death-Bed repentance is greatly countenanced. Men commence Saints *per saltum* as they say, as the *Romans* made Gentlemen; *Memento turbinis exit Marcus Dama*, in the turning of an hand a lewd and flagitious person starts up a great Saint. The ground of this opinion is, they suppose that which is undoubtedly true, that God knows men's hearts; but then they infer that which is very dangerous, that therefore so that be turned right, it is no matter with him whether there proceed any *fruits worthy of repentance, and amendment of life.*

To all these I might further add, those that reckon the change of opinion, being of an admired Sect, coming over with great zeal to a new party, a demure garb, an austere temper, or at most some partial reformation to be sufficient signs of regeneration, which fancy agrees too well to the humour of a great part of Men of this age; but I shall not need to proceed further in reckoning up these mistakes, nor do I think it necessary to apply a particular confutation to doctrines so very absurd at the first view: but I will now, as I promised, demonstrate the necessity of the doctrine I have asserted, which will be an effectual detection of the fallacy of all these other now recited. And this I will do by these four Arguments.

§. II. First, if God in the Holy Scripture doth require of those that have lived wickedly, as the
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condition of their absolution and reconciliation to himself, that they be not only sorry for their sins, and resolve upon a new course, but expressly calls for actual performance of such resolutions and real reformation; then those must be strangely bold and presumptuous men that will conceive hopes of pardon upon any other terms. But that this which we assert, and nothing less, is the declared condition of mercy, these following Passages amongst innumerable others do abundantly evince. The first I take notice of is that of the Prophet *Isaiah*, Chap. 1. Vers. 11, 13, &c. *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of Rams, and the fat of fed Beasts; and I delight not in the bloud of Bullocks, or of Lambs, or of He-Goats. Bring no more vain oblations, incense is abomination to me, the new Moons and Sabbaths, the calling of Assemblies I cannot away with, it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the Fatherless, plead for the Widow. Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, &c.* Of like import is that of the Prophet *Ezekiel*, Chap. 18. Vers. 21, 22, 28. *But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All the transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him.—Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his trans-*

transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. So also Micah 6. 6, 7, 8. *Where-withal shall I come before the Lord, and bow my self before the High God? shall I come before him with the burnt offerings, with Calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of Rams, or with ten thousand rivers of Oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my Body for the sin of my Soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.*

In all which places God puts a slight upon all the most solemn expressions of penitence, when they are dis-joynd from actual amendment of life. And touching Sacrifice, it is very remarkable that though that was a right of God's own allowance for the expiation of sin, and had also conjoynd with it the guilty persons confession of his fault, and that particularly (as *Maimonides* assures us) and considering the usual cost of the oblation was a mulct upon the sinner, and some kind of reparation to God, yet this is declared of no efficacy without reformation.

Thus it was in the Old Testament, and in the New the case is plainer if it be possible; for thus *John the Baptist* preaches, that they should not think it sufficient to submit to the baptism of repentance: *But bring forth fruits worthy of repentance*, Matt. 3. 8. And such is the discourse of our Saviour himself, Matth. 7. 21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven. q. d.* It is not all the importunity of Prayers or Addresses, that will avail without obedience. So the Apostle *S. Paul*, 2 Tim. 2. 19. *The foundation of God standeth sure,*
having

having this seal, the Lord knoweth who are his, and let him that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. *q. d.* The Election of God shall not be frustrate, nor the ends of Christ's death defeated; nevertheless let no man pretend to be concerned in the one, nor interested in the other, but he that is really a good and holy man. And (not to heap up Scriptures unnecessarily in so plain a case) upon this account it is, that Religion is described by a walk, a course, a warfare, a life, &c. because that which God requires indispensably of men is not an agony or passion for their miscarriages, or a resolution of amendment, but an habit of vertuous conversation; and all this is graphically represented by our Saviour in a Parable not unlike this before us, Matt. 21. vers. 28, 29, &c. *What think you? a certain man had two Sons: and he said to the first, Son, go work to day in my Vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterwards he repented and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, Sir, but went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his Father, &c.* The case was this, the Scribes and Pharisees, and Rulers of the Jews made a great shew of piety, they complemented God with Prayers and other Addresses, and seemed ready prest for his service; whereas the Publicans and Harlots had lived with as little pretence of piety as morality, yet these at last being convinced of their danger come to repentance, and really perform what the other did but promise. And this puts me in mind of a story in *Plutarch* very applicable to the present purpose. It happened that the Image of *Minerva* the great Goddess of *Athens* was to be new made; and in a case which they esteemed of so great moment, all care was taken to employ the most accurate and able

*Plutarch.
Reip. ger.
praecept.*

ble

ble Workman; whereupon every Artift both desirous of the honour and profit, by some means or other recommends himself to the employment; but amongst the rest, appears one, who in a long and Eloquent Oration, magnifies his own ability in that kind, and drew all men's Eyes upon him, till at last another rises up and uses only this short, but significant saying, *Whatever that man hath said I will perform.* This man no doubt was entertained for the employment; and most assuredly the man who actually performs his vows, and doth what others talk of, or make pretences to, is the only person that finds acceptance with the Almighty. For,

Secondly, it would beget in the minds of men very mean and unworthy notions of God as an easie Majesty, should he suffer himself to be put off with complemental addresses, or divert his just indignation without honourable satisfaction; and to think to prevail with him by costly Sacrifices and Oblations would speak him a necessitous Deity, that could either be pleased with such trifles, or were fond of such empty things as men dote upon: it would also take away all the veneration of his Laws, and divest him of that glorious Attribute of Justice, if he could be supposed to dispense with obedience upon any of these conditions. To imagine that sighs and tears, and melancholy reflections upon our selves would propitiate him, charges him with severity and cruelty, as if he took pleasure in the calamities and sufferings of his Creatures; it makes him appear like to the *Pagan Idol Baal*, whose Priests not only with vehement importunity called upon him from Morning till Noon, *O Baal bear us*, 1 *Kings* 18. but in a frantick mood leaped upon the altar, and cut themselves with

Knives

Knives and Lancets till the blood gushed out, that by this means they might move his compassion towards them. And which is worse yet, no Man that considers these things, can reasonably doubt, but God may abate his Creatures these things, if he pleases; and then the consequence is very sad, for if he be supposed to require those things, as the conditions of his favour, which he may abate, all Religion is made Arbitrary, and the most fundamental reason of obedience destroyed; and the horrible imputation laid upon God, that if he damn any, it is because he rigidly insists upon such things as he might have indulged.

Now all these things being intolerable, it must needs be true, that the only way of propitiating the Divine Majesty, is by being sincerely good, by ingenuous compliance with his Laws, by actual reformation; for this renders him truly great, and just, and good; this is a reasonable service worthy of his excellency, when all the powers of Man are made subject to him, and we love him with *all our might, and soul, and strength.*

But if it be said, all this may be done by the resolution of the mind to amend, though no such thing actually follow, because God sees things in their causes, and knowing the hearts of men, needs not the fruits, since he foresees it in the roots. To this I answer, that where it pleases God by cutting off the thread of men's lives to interrupt the prosecution of their intended reformation, there it is reasonable to hope that he will accept the will for the deed; but where-ever he affords opportunity of executing Men's intentions, there at least can be no just expectation that he should admit of less than what is both so agreeable to his revealed will, and also so much necessary to the interest of

his glory, inasmuch as it is fit, that the divine sovereignty, as well as the justice and wisdom of his Laws (all which have been violated by sin) should be vindicated and justified by the sinners retracting his own act, and doing contrary to that wherein he had offended, and that by *letting his good works shine before men, he may glorifie his heavenly Father*, as heretofore he hath dishonoured him by his neglects and disobedience. But,

Thirdly, if it were both consistent with the declaration of the divine will, and also with his glory and interest to admit of any thing less than actual reformation at the hands of the sinner; and could God be supposed inclinable to dispense with it, yet the very condition of Heaven, and the state and condition of the other world will necessarily require it. The Apostle tells us, *Hebr. 6. 9.* there are *τις ἔσχατα οὐρανίας*, i. e. some things that carry such a relation to the other world, that a Man cannot be damned with them, nor saved without them. Or as the same Apostle saith elsewhere, *Col. 1. 12.* there are certain things that make Men *ἕτοιμα*, meet to be partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light; and on the other hand, it is in the nature of other things to make Men *vessels of wrath*, and to *fit them for destruction*. If therefore we should suppose sin to do no wrong to God, yet it doth wrong to our own nature, unfitting us for our ends, and making us incapable of our happiness; and if a course of vertue be not profitable to God, nor can make him any amends, yet it amends us both in our faculties, and in our capacities. For certainly God doth not by a fatal sentence doom Men to the Pit of Hell, nor by his Almighty power precipitate them thither, until their own wickedness had prepared them and disposed

fed them forthat state. In which sense I see no reason (with the pardon of a late Learned Person) but to take that passage, *Acts 1. 25.* where it is said of *Judas*, that *he went to his own place.* For Hell is the proper place of sin, and sin thrusts a man down thither; or the Central Powers of those infernal Regions, as it were, draw and suck in the sinner. And therefore the very damned can never think hardly of God, as if he took pleasure in their misery, but must for ever curse their own folly, which made it fit and necessary that God should do what he doth.

The Apostle tells us, *Rom. 14. 17.* *The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost:* which saying is indeed to be understood of the state of Christianity; notwithstanding, if we will consider, it will appear to us that Heaven it self as it signifies the state of blessedness in the other World, consists not so much in the external glory of a Palace, or any other circumstances, either to accommodate the body, or to entertain the imagination, as in a state of perfect purity, peace and love, clear knowledge of the mind, just order of all the powers, the light of God's countenance, ready and chearfull compliance with his will, comfortable reflections upon our former carriage, blessed society of Saints and Angels, and everlasting life for the durable enjoyment of all these unspeakably good things. And on the other side, Hell is not so dreadful for the horrid circumstances of the place, (though that be sad enough) as that there a Man is banished from God, and all his powers in confusion, he is filled with rage, horribly and perpetually lashed by his own Conscience, and scorned and tortured by infernal Furies, to whose company he is for ever condemned without hopes of recovery.

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Now

Now though it cannot be said that every holy and vertuous Man must naturally and necessarily be intitled to the happiness of Heaven, because the glories of that state are of God's special provision, and therefore must be at his disposal ; and besides, there is no Man whose vertue hath been such as to render him capable thereof, without the interposition of the divine mercy in *Jesus Christ* : Yet it is evident, that there is a great suitableness between the temper of a brave Man, and the state of Heaven ; a just, wise, chaste, temperate and peaceable person, is prepared and disposed as a Candidate for that state ; and on the contrary, a debauched and vicious man is utterly unfit for it, and carries the very ingredients of Hell about him.

Take for example a cruel, malicious, and mischievous man, whose soul is in his spleen, and who continually sacrifices to those accursed Fiends, rancour and revenge ; let any Man be Judge, whether such a Man can be a fit inhabitant of those peaceful Regions above, and that amicable society of Saints and Angels ? or what can be more natural to him, and proper for him, than the company of Devils which he so exactly resembles ? Or take a turbulent and seditious person, a *Boutefeu*, whose only pleasure hath been to disturb the world, that never discerned the beauty of order, nor tasted the sweets of peace, nor framed himself to duty and obedience ; what should such a Man do in Heaven where all is order and harmony ? he is only fit for the infernal hurry, and we may very aptly apply the stately expression of the Prophet to his case, *Isa. 14. 9. Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming ; it stirreth up the dead for thee : and art thou become like unto us, &c.* Once more, take a man wholly addicted to sensuality, and

and the beastly pleasures of the body, to eat and drink, and live voluptuously, what should this man do in Heaven? What is there for him, where there is no use of the belly; and where the pleasures are sublime and intellectual? what delights can the presence of an holy Majesty, a blessed *Jesus*, and the harmony of an heavenly Quire, minister to him that hath never relished other musick than the wild roarings of a debauch, or the soft charms of sensuality? He that is capable of that blessed state, and of those entertainments, must be such an one as hath been habituate to sobriety and chastity, that hath learned to deny and castigate the importunities of his Senses, that hath laboured to live out of the body whilst he was in it. Now this is not to be performed by a sudden pang of devotion, nor by a meer resolution or intention of becoming virtuous, (howsoever serious that may be) but by long exercise, serious indeavour, a habit and a new nature.

4. But in the fourth and last place, if we could suppose, that neither the nature and state of the world to come, did necessarily require such habitual vertue, as we have shewed it doth; nor that God had resolved to insist upon the actual performance of our resolutions: I say, if God would pardon a man upon the meer acknowledgment of his offence, and sorrow for it, yet would not the penitent pardon himself in this case: I mean, it would be impossible for him to find any quiet in his bosom, till he had in some measure effaced the memory of his former wickedness by a course of generous vertue. For when once a man's Eyes are open to see his shamefull folly, and his heart made so sensible as to relent at his mis-doing, he will have such an abhorrence of himself for his own unrea-

sonableness, that he will be so far from looking up to God with comfort, or towards men with confidence; that he will not be able to endure his own face, until he have by a singular diligence endeavoured to rescind his own act, and in some measure repaired the injuries his lewd extravagancies have made him guilty of. Accordingly *S. Paul*, as we have noted before, seems to carry about him a bleeding sense of his former miscarriages, but *1 Cor. 15. 10.* he had this to support him, that although he was as *one born out of due time*, coming late into *Christ's* service; yet from that time he *laboured more abundantly* than those that came earlier into the Vineyard.

It is a most impertinent inquiry which some melancholy persons have been taught to make; have I been humbled enough for sin? is the measure of my sorrow sufficient for my guilt? have I lain long enough under the terrours of the Law, and the spirit of bondage? For God requires not sorrow for it self, but for its end; and it is no satisfaction to him that his Creatures lie under affrightfull apprehensions; besides, our own Consciences will tell us, we may then ~~say~~ *close* our Eyes and be comfortable when the cause is taken away, and not before; for then is it *Godly sorrow when it bringeth forth repentance not to be repented of*, *2 Cor. 7. 10.*

And herein lies the great uncomfortableness of a death-bed repentance, for (besides the horrible madness of trusting the issues of eternity, upon extempore preparations) if it should please God to give a man both the grace and the opportunity, then at last seriously to bethink himself, to feel remorse for his sins, to make resolutions, and to renew his baptismal Covenant; yet then he can give

no proof to himself of his own sincerity, because he cannot repair God's honour, he can make no conquest over Satan, he can leave no example to the world, he cannot by habit and exercise make the ways of God become easie and natural to himself, he cannot be said to have lived the life of the righteous, and therefore cannot comfortably conclude that he shall die the death of such.

As for the penitent Thief in the Gospel, that accompanied our Saviour in his sufferings upon the Cross, to whom our Saviour pronounced, *that he should that day be with him in Paradise*; his case was peculiar, probably he had lived in great darkness and ignorance, and never had the means of grace till now; but however it was not unagreeable to the divine wisdom and goodness to do something extraordinary at that great time, and to signalize the efficacy of our Saviour's Mediatorship by some remarkable instance at such a time, when the dignity and glory of his person was most clouded and obscured; and as there never was nor will be such another occasion as this, so it is great and desperate folly for any man to trust to such an experiment. And whereas in the Parable, *Matth. 20. vers. 12.* those Labourers that came into the Vineyard at the eleventh hour are rewarded equally with *those that had born the burden and heat of the day*; It is in the first place to be observed, that though they came late, yet not so late, but that they did really work in the Vineyard; and then besides, here is nothing contrary to what we are pressing, for we are far from intention of discouraging any to return at last, or from limiting the ~~mercy~~ of God, who is able to fore-see what a late Convert would have done if he had opportunity, and may accordingly extend mercy to him.

All therefore which I say, is, that this is a most uncomfortable state, when a man's Conscience cannot give security for him; nor is there any thing that affords him positive grounds of hope, having not performed the conditions of the New Covenant, only he hath a general refuge in the merits of *Christ* and in God's mercy.

Wherefore there is all the reason, and all the wisdom in the world, that a man should not trust to prefaces and *præludia*, beginnings and first Essays of repentance, but let it have its perfect work; that with the Prodigal Son, he not only sit down and bewail his misery, or to take up resolutions of returning to his Father; but that he forthwith set about it and effect it; *So he arose and came to his Father.* What entertainment he meets with from his Father upon so doing, I am now to shew in the third and last Part of the Parable.

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THE
Penitent Pardoned:
 OR, A
 DISCOURSE
 OF THE
 NATURE of SIN,
 AND THE
 EFFICACY of REPENTANCE,
 Under the
Parable of the Prodigal Son.

PART III.

The Prodigal received and reconciled, or
 God's gracious reception of a Penitent
 Sinner.

S. Luke 15. Verse 22, 23, 24.

*But the Father said to his servants, Bring forth
 the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on
 his hand, and shoes on his feet.*

And

And bring hither the fatted Calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and be merry.

For this my Son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found, &c.

CHAP. I.

Of Reconciliation, or Justification.

THE CONTENTS

- §. I. *The passionate story of Joseph, Gen. 37. parallel to this Parable before us.*
- §. II. *God takes notice of the first beginnings of good in men. The use of that consideration.*
- §. III. *God's compassion and tenderness to men under agonies of mind, yet without the weakness of humane passion.*
- §. IV. *God not only takes delight in beginnings of good, but promotes them by his grace. The famous story in Eusebius of S. John, and a dissolute young man; and several usefull observations thereupon.*
- §. V. *The greatness of God's pardoning mercy, and the fulness and compleatness thereof upon repentance, shew'd out in several great instances, full of unspeakable consolation to the Penitent, and wherein God's mercies out-go those mercifull men; the greatness of the sin of our first Parents, and of the Jews in crucifying our Lord; which notwithstanding were both pardoned.*
- §. VI. *Of the Novatian Heresy, and the mischiefs of it.*
- §. VII. *Practical reflections upon Justification.*

§ I. **I**T is a very lively and pathetick story which *Moses* gives us concerning *Jacob* and his Sons, especially his beloved Son *Joseph*, to this effect. The Brethren of *Joseph* envying him that great share he had in his Father's affections, resolve some way or other to dispatch him out of the way; but that they might not imbrue their hands in his blood, they conclude to sell him a slave to the *Medianites*, (that happened at that time to come in the way) and to hide their own fault from their Father, they kill a Kid, and dip *Joseph's* Coat in the blood, and telling a demure story to the old Man, impose upon his belief that some wild Beast had devoured his Son. Which when the good Man was possesst of, he most tenderly resents the affliction, rents his Cloaths, puts Sackcloth upon his Loins, and mourned many days. Whereupon his Sons and Daughters, and even those especially that had raised the tragedy, personate so well as to take upon them to be his comforters; but the wound was too deep to be easily cured, for he refuses consolation: *No* (saith he) *I will go down to the grave to my Son mourning*: my grief shall only wear away with my life, and only the land of oblivion shall make me forget *Joseph*. At last, after a long and sad time of lamentation, there comes the surprizing news to the good man, *Joseph thy Son is yet alive, and Ruler of all the Land of Egypt*. The aged Father faints at the tidings, the News was too good to be true; the apprehension of his Son's death had seized him so long, that he could not believe any thing to the contrary now; and by the report of his life his wounds bleed afresh, and the grief for the loss of him was so renewed, that the good man sinks into a *Deliquium*.

Gen. chap.
37. continued to
Chap. 45.

But

But when they had opportunity to report the whole business, to relate the message was brought from Joseph, and especially came to real proof, shewing him the Waggon which his Son had sent to bring him down into Egypt, Then (saith the Text) *the Spirit of their Father revived*; and he is as ready to be transported with an ecstasy of joy now, as to be overwhelmed with sadness before; but he recovers himself, *And Israel said, It is enough, Joseph my Son is yet alive, I will go down and see him before I die.*

The story, besides the unquestionable authority of sacred record, carries the natural marks of truth upon it; all things being represented so done, as they must needs be done upon supposition of the fact. And for the lively strokes of passion in it, I know not whether any thing in all History be able to match it, grief and joy, great as their several causes, taking place successively, vying with, and setting off each other.

Now although the business which we have at present before us be only a Parable, yet it is not much unlike that History; for here we find a beloved Son at different times under the extremities of good and evil; one while as miserable as folly and misfortune can make him, another while recovering himself and his station again, and in all this diversity of fortune, a good Father passionately concerned with him, grieving and rejoicing respectively, as the condition of his Son gave him occasion, and all express with equal life, as in the former History; as if it were not a representation of what might be done, but what was really matter of fact.

We

We have hitherto seen the tragical part only, the Son's folly and misery, and the Father's grief; the Son running on from one intemperance to another till his Father despaired of him, and he found himself ruined; but then by a great providence he comes to himself and returns, but (as we say) by weeping cross.

But now the scene is changed; the Son is recovered and the Father revived, and all is joy and gladness. Here the good Shepherd bringeth his lost Sheep home on his shoulders rejoicing; here we see the good *Samaritan* pouring in Wine and Oyl, and binding up the wounds of him that was miserably wounded, and in a deplorable condition. In short, here we have a kind Father owning, receiving and endowing his returning Son; and here we have God Almighty the Father of Spirits, pardoning and blessing penitent Sinners.

§ II. But to come to particulars, whether we attend to the literal or the mystical sense of the Parable; in this last part of it we shall easily observe these four remarkable passages.

1. *The passionate interview, the benign aspect and kind greeting the Father affords his Son upon his first appearance in his way homewards.*

2. *The kind and present supply of the Son's wants; or the ornaments which the Father bestows upon him being now returned.*

3. *The splendid reception and entertainment he makes for him.*

4. *And fourthly and lastly, his apology for so doing.*

I be-

I begin with the first, (*viz.*) the passionate greeting at the first interview expressed thus, vers. 20, 21, 22. *But when he was yet a great way off, his Father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the Son said to his Father, Father, I have sinned, &c.*

The Son relents, and the Father melts into compassion; The Son is ashamed, and the Father's bowels yern towards him; the affections of a Father prevent the Son's humiliation and acknowledgments, and yet the Father's kindness will not discharge or supersede the Son's duty: there is a noble contention between them; the one would demonstrate more love, and the other strives to equal that with ingenuity. It is hard to observe order in passion; however, in the Father's carriage we take notice of these four steps.

First, he takes knowledge of his Son at a distance, *whilst he was yet a great way off*, though probably his former vices had disfigured him, and his poverty disguised him, long absence might have estranged him, and age had somewhat altered him; yet paternal affection is quick and sagacious, he discovered and distinguished him notwithstanding.

Secondly, his sight affects his heart, when he saw him, *επαλαγχεῖσθαι*, he had compassion, his bowels yerned towards him: far sooner is the heart of a Father dissolved into kindness, than that of a Son into obedience; a great deal of consideration and resolution at last brings the Son to recover his sense of duty, but the Father takes fire presently, and the flame is not to be concealed. For

Thirdly, The greatness of his passion prompts him beyond the gravity of his years, the dignity of his relation, and above the remembrance of his just offence; for *he ran to meet his Son.*

And

And then lastly, he indulges his affections, or cannot command them; *he falls on his neck and kisses him*; he forgets all former undutifulness and provocation, he stands not rigidly expostulating the matter, nor scrupulously weighing formalities, but makes the fullest expressions of joy and endearment.

Now in a due proportion to all these particulars (making only a just allowance for the Majesty of God) is the condescension of our Heavenly Father towards returning Sinners, as I will shew by drawing the parallel in all the aforesaid particulars something more at large.

First, as an Earthly Parent that has lost a Son, carries the Image of him in his thoughts, and never so loses the remembrance of him, but that upon every the least occasion he occurs to his mind, and therefore he will be quick in apprehending the first approaches of him, if he happen to return: so God our heavenly Father hath so tender a love to men, and such a concern for their good and happiness, that he takes notice of their first motions towards himself; he discerns the first reasonings, the relentings, the agonies of mind, the first dawnings towards a resolution of returning.

We see not the Corn grow, only we discover when it is grown; nor do we discern how our own members are fashioned in the womb; but the curious Eye of God observes the first lines and traces of nature, the first Essays and palpitations of life, upon which account the Psalmist admires the divine providence, Psal 139, 14, 15, 16. *I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: — My substance was not hid from thee when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance being*

being yet imperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, which in process of time were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. And much more doth he observe the most weak and imperfect Essays of the new birth, or as the Apostle expresses it, when Christ is beginning to be formed in men, I saw thee (saith our Saviour to Nathanael) S. John 1. 48. when thou wast under the fig-tree; when thou wast reasoning about me whether I was the Messiah or not. I was privy to that conflict of thy thoughts, between the report of the miracles wrought by me, and the prejudicate opinion concerning the supposed place of my nativity; I was not so much offended with thy objections, as pleased with thy sincerity, in that thou didst diligently inquire, honestly debate, and proceed to resolution upon rational satisfaction.

Most apposite to this purpose is that passage of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chap. 31. vers. 18, 19, 20. *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because I did hear the reproach of my youth. And after he had thus passionately described the first kindlings of repentance in the hearts of the people of Israel, he then introduces God, taking notice and expressing his compassions in the next words. Is Ephraim my dear Son? is he a pleasant Child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord. By all which we see that God despiseth not the day of small things.*

Now

Now the consideration of this affords mighty encouragement to Sinners to begin their motion to God-ward; who would not put himself upon the way, when the first attempt of returning shall be taken notice of? If a man do but consider, if he do but pray, if but breathe and pant after God, there is a gracious Eye upon him, it is not altogether lost labour; Nay, (saith our Saviour) *A cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple, shall not lose its reward.* And if such mean performances pass not unrewarded, much less doth any thing of good escape God's notice and observation.

And upon the same consideration there is great reason of caution, and that Men take heed of discouraging any (though never so small) hopes of good, and buddings of reformation in others; for seeing God takes notice of beginnings, he must needs be offended with those that obstruct them, and will be sure severely to resent it. Let therefore those that scoff at prayer and devotion as preciseness, at seriousness and self-reflection, as melancholy degeneracy of spirit, that either press Men forward into the same excess of riot with themselves, or labour to divert or stifle all workings of Conscience by the means of sensual entertainments, or treat those with contumely, who boggle at their extravagancies, and begin to take up and reform: let all such, I say, consider well what to do, when God's Eye is upon such beginnings of good, lest they be found fighters against God. And let all that have any sense of goodness themselves, or but so much as a reverence of God's All-seeing Eye, think it becomes them to encourage such beginnings, to endeavour to kindle such sparks, and blow them up into a flame of love to God and goodness; to

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which

which purpose I take liberty to apply a passage of the Prophet *Isaiab*, Chap. 65. vers. 8. *Thus saith the Lord, as the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for there is a blessing in it, q. d.* The wise Master of the Vineyard (especially in an unfruitful time) takes special notice of those few Grapes in a cluster that have good juice in them, and will neither permit them to be carelessly crushed with the hand, nor cast away amongst refuse. So will the God of *Israel* do by his Vineyard the House of *Israel*; he will take notice of the few that are good in the midst of a bad generation, and not destroy all together. And in like manner, he will not despise the first Essays of emergency from former vice and wickedness. But thus I am led to the second parallel.

S. III, 2. The Father as soon as he saw his Son, had compassion; so hath God to Mankind, especially when he sees them on their way homeward. He had always good will towards them as they were his Creatures, made in his own Image, designed for his service, and for the enjoyment of himself; and upon all these accounts hath a propension to do them good. But so long as any Man continues in a course of rebellion against him, all the issues and expressions of this good will are obstructed; which nevertheless as soon as ever he begins to relent and come to himself, break out again and discover themselves. For (as the Psalmist tells us,) *Like as a Father pitieth his Children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him, Psal. 103. 13.*

Not that we are to imagine the Divine Majesty to be subject to the weakness of humane passion in a strict and proper sense, so as to feel any pain or trouble upon the account of his concern for Mankind,

kind, for that the spirituality of his nature, the perfection of his understanding and his self-sufficiency, will by no means admit of. But he is pleased in Holy Scripture to represent himself after that manner, to the intent that we may be encouraged to hope and to endeavour, since we are assured that he is not a meer spectator of the conflicts and agonies of a Penitent, but hath a real inclination to do him good, and would by no means have him perish. To this purpose, Ezek. 33. 11. he swears, *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel? What greater passion can any Father express towards his beloved Son, than God here condescends to? and what greater assurance can God give of his earnestness and reality, than that of an Oath by himself?*

Whilst men are at the worst, the divine goodness finds out some arguments of pity, for he considers he made them fallible Creatures, that he gave them not the bright and piercing intellects of Angels, he joined matter and spirit together in their composition, by means whereof there is a continual contest between sense and reason, a constant dispute betwixt *bonum utile*, and *jucundum*; that their transgression is not like that of Devils, who sinned *proprio motu*, without a temptation; he knows the power of example, the prejudices of education, the long follies of Child-hood; and therefore, as I have shewed before, is not implacable towards Mankind, whilst the state of life and this world lasts. But when he takes notice that any Man begins to recollect himself, to emerge out of his folly, to remember his Father's house, and

to thirst after external life; he is infinitely pleased with it, and cherishes such blossoms.

Thus it was prophesied of the *Messias*, and interpreted and applied to our Saviour by the Evangelist, Matth. 12. 20. *A bruised reed shall be not break, and smoking flax shall be not quench, until he send forth judgment into victory, i. e.* He will neither precipitate those upon utter ruine who are very near it, and have cast themselves upon the brink of danger, so long as there is hopes remaining of their recovery; nor much less will he despise and extinguish the least sparks and beginnings of good, but encourage and promote them.

Mark. 10. 21. And this we observe to be verified in the young man in the Gospel, of whom we have taken notice before; he made some Conscience of his ways, and inquired after eternal life, and was willing to do something to attain it; wherefore though he was far from being generously good, nevertheless the Text tells us, *Jesus look'd upon him, and loved him.*

In short therefore, whatsoever God's proceedings shall be with impenitent and incurable sinners in the other world, who have withstood the whole day of grace, and abused all his patience and kindness; I say, whatever severity his wisdom and justice may then require, when men have *treasured up wrath against the day of wrath*, and fitted themselves for destruction: yet certainly in this life, and whilst there is any hope, God is compassionate towards them; he pities those he cannot love, and loves those that pity themselves; and delights in those that love him. But this pity of the Almighty, which yet is one of the lowest instances of his benignity, consists not as it doth often in men, in a soft sympathy with the miserable, or ineffective wishes

wishes of their good ; but is like himself, great and powerfull in its effects. For in the next place,

§. IV. 3. As the Father not only admits his Son when he returns to him, *but runs to meet him* ; so doth the Almighty help and bring on sinners in their way to himself. S. *Jerom* I confess understands this passage (in the mystical sense) to point at the Incarnation of our Saviour, wherein God may very properly be said to meet man, taking our humane nature that he might make us partakers of his Divine. But I rather apply it to the efficacious assistance which God gives by his Grace to all beginnings of good in men. *Miraris homines ad Deos ire* (saith *Seneca*) *Deus ad homines venit, imò (quod propius est) in homines venit, nulla sine Deo mens bona est.* And a little before he had said, *Non sunt dii fastidiosi, non invidi, admittunt, & ascendibus manus porrigunt.* Which words of his may thus be rendred in a Scripture phrase. God though he be the high and lofty one, inhabiting eternity, yet is not stately and disdainful ; he neither envies nor grudges men's happiness ; and though he dwell in the high and holy place, yet to this man will he look that is of a broken and contrite spirit : and he will be so far from repulsing his endeavours of ascending up to him, that he reaches out a hand of mercy to pull him up to himself. Wonder not then that men attain to God, when he vouchsafes to come down to them, nay, to come in to them, for never was any virtuous mind without his help.

Senec. Ep.
77.

To that purpose speaks the excellent Moralist, but the Holy Scripture most expressly, *Phil. 2. 12.* It is God that worketh both to will and to do : and *Jo. 6. 44.* No man cometh unto me, except my Father which hath sent me, draw him. And this temper is that which the Prophet magnificently describes

cribes the *Messias* by, *Isai. 40. 11. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the Lambs with his arms and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young: And thus also the Prophet Hosea sets forth God's dealing with his people Israel, Hosea 11. 3. I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms: I drew them with the cords of a man, with the bands of love. In which passages, though God by the Prophets describe the way of his providence with literal Israel, the Jewish Nation, yet as that People was a type of the spiritual Israel, so did God's methods with them resemble the gracious condescension he uses towards the Souls of men in their conversion to himself.*

Euseb. Ec-
cles. Hist.
li. 3. cap.
17.

I cannot upon this occasion omit a most affecting and remarkable story which *Eusebius* reports upon the credit both of *S. Irenæus*, and *Clement Alexandrinus* to this effect. *S. John* the Apostle in his visitation of the Churches near about *Ephesus*, happens there to fix his Eyes upon a certain young man, who he conjectured (from the comeliness of his shape, vigorous cheerfulness of his Eyes, and other indications of a generous spirit) might become an eminent and useful person, if effectual care was taken of his education. He therefore calls to the Bishop of the place, and solemnly conjures him in the presence of *Christ* and his Holy Church, to spare no pains or care in cultivating the mind and manners of the young man. The Bishop undertakes it, and accordingly takes him into his own House, uses him as his own Son, instructs him, baptizes, and at length confirms him in the Christian Faith: which having done, he thinks now he might be a little more secure of him, and trust him to his own conduct. But he had no sooner done so, but certain loose young men presently insinuate them-

themselves into his acquaintance, and first debauch him with light careffes, and jovial affignations; and then (as it often happens) to maintain those excesses, they draw him into a confederacy of robbery: and in that flagitious society, this young man quickly becomes so great a proficient, as to be Captain and Leader of the Fraternity. At this season (as God would have it) the Apostle returns again into those parts, and presently requires an account from the Bishop, of the young man committed to his trust; the good old man with sorrow in his heart, and tears in his Eyes, replies, Alas he is dead! dead, I say, to God and all goodness; he is become a common Thief and Cut-throat, hath deserted the Church where I trained him up, and now keeps his station in the Mountains hard by, from whence he makes his frequent sallies to commit all kind of Villany. The Apostle (aged as he was) considers not his own infirmity, but the recovery of the young man, and therefore calling for an Horse and a Guide, presently issues forth into the Mountains where he had been told his haunts were. There he no sooner arrives, but he is arrested by the Centinel Thief: whereat he betraying no fear or surprisal, as having in part attained what he sought, Shew me (saith he) your Captain. The Captain hearing this, and wondering what should be the errand, presents himself armed to receive him, till he soon perceived who it was; but then, seized with shame, he makes from him with all the speed he could. The Apostle forgetting his age and gravity, follows him with all his might, crying out; "My Son, my Son, dost thou fly thy Father? thy aged unarmed Father? Fear me not; I come not armed to destroy thee, but desirous to save thee; I'll pray for thee, I'll inter-

"cede with *Christ Jesus* on thy behalf : I am ready to lay down my life to save thy Soul." The revolted youth hearing this, makes a stand, and then with Eyes cast down, and Weapons laid aside, begins to tremble, and at last weeping bitterly, is in the words of the Historian, Re-baptized in his own tears. Then *S. John* embracing him, prays for him, fasts with him, instructs him, and leaves him not till he had not only restored him to the society of the Church, but settled him in the publick Ministry thereof.

The story is very admirable in all the parts of it, as wherein, amongst other things, we may observe in the first place, how quickly bad company insinuates its contagion, and corrupts youthful minds ; and that neither fine Parts, nor the best Education, are sufficient security for a vertuous course, unless *Appl's* water, as well as *Paul* plant, and God also give the increase.

Again, it is worth observing how easie and sudden the transition is from a luxurious to a lawless life. This young man began his risk in riot, and ends it in robbery. Although this be no strange thing, for besides that intemperance makes men bold and rash, and fit for any desperate enterprize, they that are come to that, that they care not what they spend, are usually forced not to regard how they get it. We note also from this story, that great Wits, and curious tempers are like Razor-mettle quickly turned, and if they miscarry, they become the most notorious Debauchees ; but if they be well set, and hold right, become most eminently useful. Moreover, we may here also take notice how a sense of guilt and disingenuity baffles a Man's spirit, dejects his courage, disarms and subdues him ; whereas on the other side, conscience of sincerity

and

and good designs, spirits and actuates a Man above his age, temper and common capacity. But that which I principally remark in the story, is, the paternal affection in the aged Apostle toward this dissolute and lost young man; how fresh the concern for him was in his thoughts, when he came into those parts again where he left him? with what strictness he requires the *depositum* of the Bishop, how he forgets himself to recover him; what charms there were in the countenance, voice, motion, of the aged Father; how strange a thing it was to see a young *Herod*, running away from an old Apostle; an armed Captain not daring to stand before unarmed and infirm old age: to observe the spirit, the passion, the flaming love of a good man to the Soul of a desperate sinner; and in all this, to see a lively resemblance of God's goodness to men. For God doth not only (as I have said before) receive men upon their return, but moves towards them, invites, nay, draws them to himself. He is so far from positively hardening sinners, that he takes off their hardness; he allures them by his promises, prevents them by his grace, way-lays them by his providence, calls upon them by his word, melts them by his kindness, works upon them by his Spirit; and this Spirit takes all advantageous seasons, watches the *mollia tempora fandi*, suggests thoughts to their minds, holds their minds close and intent, gives them a prospect of the other world; and by several other ways (without violence to their faculties) helps forward their return to God.

S. V. 4. Lastly, As the Earthly Father for joy of his Sons return, forgets all his anger, and the causes of it; passes by his ingratitude and dissolution
of

of manners, and treats him with infinite demonstrations of kindness, *falling on his neck and kissing him*: So doth our Heavenly Father cast all the iniquities of the penitent behind his back, blots them out of his book; makes no severe reflections, no bitter expostulations, no upbraidings, but passes an act of perfect amnesty and oblivion. Justin Martyr in his Work against Trypho, brings in our Saviour, saying, *Εὐ εἰς αὐτοὺς καταλάβω, ἐν τούτοις ἡ κενὴ*. The words are no where to be found in the Gospel, but the sense is, *That God takes men as they are, and considers not how evil they have been, so that now they become sincerely good.* This the Prophet Ezekiel frequently proclaims on the behalf of God, Chap. 18. especially vers. 22. *All his sin that he hath committed shall not be once mentioned against him; but in his righteousness that he hath done, he shall live.* For as if men apostatize from hopeful and vertuous beginnings, it shall not at all avail them that they set out well, and began in the Spirit, when as they end in the Flesh, (upon which account it is a very vain thing for them to go about to comfort themselves against their present looseness, by remembering the time of their conversion, and the great passion they have sometime had for Religion, but which now they have apostatized from, *having lost their first love*;) so on the contrary, he that was a sinner, but now is not; i. e. is now sincerely returned from his licentiousness to his duty, shall never have his former disobedience imputed to him by God.

Rev. 2. 4.

Philo lib.
de Abra-
hamo.

This truth Philo represents handsomely in his Allegorical way; when glossing upon what the Scripture saith of Enoch, *After his translation he was not found; because God had translated him*; he paraphrases on this manner: God (saith he) *having changed*

changed him from an evil to a virtuous man, the traces of his former wickedness were no more to be found, than if no such thing had ever been committed.

But this gracious procedure of God with penitent sinners deserves to be more fully and particularly unfolded; and if we diligently consider what the Scripture assures us of the greatness of God's pardoning mercy, we shall observe these three remarkable circumstances all pregnant of unspeakable consolation.

1. *He pardons great and many sins, not only lighter provocations.*
2. *He forgives repeated follies, and relapsed sinners.*
3. *His pardon is full and absolute.*

1. First, amongst Men there are some sins that are scarcely (if at all) thought to be pardonable, as where there is malice and treachery involved in the fact, or where there is contumely added to the injury. And sometimes the greatness of the person injured so enhances the offence; as that it is not thought fit to pardon: as for instance, in Treason against the Supream Power. But most certainly there are all these, and many more aggravations in most voluntary sins committed against God, and yet he pardons: *Exod. 34. 7. He pardons iniquity, transgression and sin, i. e. sin of all kinds and degrees whatsoever, excepting only the sin against the Holy Ghost; which our Saviour hath told us shall never be forgiven.* And that sin it self (whatsoever it consists in) is only upon this account unpardonable, because it hath a finally impenitent temper joined with it; otherwise were it possible that such a sinner should repent, there would be no doubt

of

of his pardon ; but bating that peculiar case, there is no sin but God hath pardoned and will pardon.

I will not take upon me to say which were the greatest sins that ever were committed by Mankind ; but I will instance in two that must needs be acknowledged to have been very great, which yet have obtained pardon ; and they are the sin of our first Parents, and the sin of the Jews in Crucifying our Saviour.

In the former of these there was (1.) the breach of a known Law, and (2.) that so newly given, as that it could not be forgotten : (3.) and it was also an easie and reasonable Law : God having allowed them all the Trees in the Garden, and laid an interdiction only upon that one ; and it was no hard matter to have denied themselves that for God's sake, especially considering (4.) they came newly out of his hands, and saw so freshly the display of his power and wisdom in the Creation of the World, (5.) and had so many and great instances of his goodness towards themselves : besides, (6.) they had as yet no vitiated faculties, (7.) nor so much as one example of sin before them, but that of the Devils, which they had seen to be most severely vindicated. It was a hard thing to be first in the transgression, and a bold thing to venture to provoke God, and to be the first instance of sin to all posterity : (8.) they had the concern of all Mankind upon them, as who (they knew) must stand or fall with them ; (9.) and having frequent tokens of God's presence with them, to sin under his Eye, (10.) and to hearken to the suggestions of a vile Beast, the Serpent, against God, was prodigiously strange, and yet they did it ; and God was pleased to pardon them.

In

In the latter of the instances, namely, the *Jews* Crucifying our Saviour; besides (1.) the greatness of the Person against whom they sinned, putting to death *the Lord of life and glory*, there was (2.) designed malice, (3.) perjury and subornation; (4.) contumely towards an holy Person, (5.) ingratitude towards one that had done them all the good they were capable of; there (6.) was contradiction to the plainest evidence of miracles of all kinds, (7.) and to the conviction of their own Consciences: Notwithstanding all which, the same *S. Peter* who, *Acts 2. 23.* had charged them home in these words, *Ye men of Israel have with wicked hands crucified and slain Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God by him did in the midst of you, as ye your selves know, &c.* yet in the 38. Verse, he exhorts the same men to repentance and to be baptized that they may receive remission of sins, and the singular favour of the gift of the Holy Ghost.

To these and several other instances of great sins (which might easily be added) we may cast in for the greater evidence of the vastness of the divine mercy, that he pardons not only single acts of sin, (how heinous soever) but long courses and habits of sin, and those of several natures and kinds; as in *Manasses*, and in the *Publicans* and *Harlots*; but that we may rise higher yet in admiration of the divine clemency, we observe

1. In the second place, that he pardons also, *repented sinners*. They have a saying, *Non licet in bello hic peccare*, that the first faults in War are severely vindicated; because there all errors are fatal, and scarce leave a capacity of being repeated. And there are some relations so near and intimate, and their ligaments so nice and curious; that a breach

breach in them can never be repaired or knit again. But the relation of a Father, and the goodness of a God, leave always room for pardon. Nay further, *They say* (saith the Prophet *Jeremiah*) *if a man put away his Wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return to her again? But thou (O Israel) hast plaid the harlot with many lovers, yet return again unto me, saith the Lord,* Jer. 2. 1, 2.

¶ 4. VI. The doctrine of the *Novatians* carried a great breadth with it in the *Primitive times*, which denied repentance to those that sinned after Baptism; and for that reason it is thought many holy men in those days deferred their Baptism as long as they could, that they might not defile their garments, but go from that washing unspotted out of the world. The opinion seemed to proceed from extraordinary purity and holiness, and therefore as I said prevailed much, and had a great reputation in those times, and it seems it took its rise from a mistake of a passage in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, Chap. 6. 4. However, it was damned by the most learned and holy Fathers of the Church, and particularly *S. Basil* and *Gr. Nazianzen* call it a damnable doctrine, and destructive of Souls, in that it discouraged and kept men off from repentance, which God is always ready to admit of it, if it be sincere, and such as we have before described.

Ἄλλοι συν-
χρῆς καὶ ὁ-
πῆλῆλοι
ἐπὶ τοῖς
ἁμαρτή-
μασι με-
τάνοιαι, ὡς
Σίμων, 2.

It is true which *Clement of Alexandria* hath said that to make a common practice of sinning, and then pretending repentance, (as if we would give God and the Devil their turns) is an argument both of an impenitent and unbelieving temper; for as he

and their ligaments so nice and curious, that a

faith afterwards, * *These frequent repentances* (as it ^{* Μαλὶς}
were of course,) ^{οὐκ ἔτι} betray rather an intention of sinning
again, than any design of leaving it, and therefore find
 no acceptance with God. And it is also certain, that
 a man that hath frequently relapsed, having there-
 by exceedingly multiplied his guilt, must needs feel
 very bitter pangs and sharp remorse when he doth
 return, and will be ever after very apt to question
 his own sincerity, and which is worse, it is to be
 feared, that (like as it is with bones which have
 been often out and set again, they will be very apt to
 slip away, so) this person will be justly looked upon
 as in great danger, and therefore hath a necessity
 of extraordinary watchfulness over himself. But
 notwithstanding all this, if such a man, after se-
 veral falls and slips shall stand right and firm at
 last, and demonstrate the truth of his now penitent
 state by the following course of an holy life, there
 is no question to be made of his acceptance with
 a merciful God. For God doth not proceed with
 men upon such terms as we do, our passions are
 stirred many time, and the provocation is too great
 for us to be able to concoct; but he is pure mind
 and reason, hath no boiling passion, no revenge, seeks
 only the good of his Creatures, and so they be-
 come at last capable of his favour and blessing; he
 is contented, and hath his end. Besides, he that
 hath made it our duty, that as often as our Brother
 offends against us and repents, so often we should
 forgive him, doth not certainly intend to be out-
 done by us in mercy the most glorious of all his at-
 tributes.

Luk. 17. 4.
Philo Jud.
lib. de vi-
him. ob-
 serves, that
 in the Sa-
 crifices for
 sin, that
 part of
 the Sacri-
 fice which
 was to be
 eaten, was
 allowed
 only to
 the Priests,
 and by
 them to

be consumed in the same day, and nothing of it to be carried out of the
 Temple. Of which he (according to his custom) gives this mystical
 and very ingenious account, viz. That the former sins of those who
 were now penitent and came to propitiate God to them by sacrifice,
 should not be made known nor remembred, or the reputation of such
 persons exposed to the malice of envious and impertinent persons.

3. God's pardon of sin upon repentance is full and compleat without any reservation; he retains no old grudge, hath no concealed spite, never rips up the old quarrel, never upbraids men with former follies, but casts all behind him, and buries them in oblivion. It is not usually thus with men, they have a distinction, *they will forgive (they say) but not forget*; and it is common with Princes to seem to pardon only till they have opportunity of a full revenge. It was strange that a man of such sincerity as *David* should have such a reserve, and yet so it was, that after he had promised and sworn to *Shimei*, that he *should not die*, 2 Sam. 19. 23; notwithstanding 1 Kings 2. 9. He gives it in charge to his Son and Successor *Solomon*, that he *should not suffer his hoary head to come to the grave without blood*. But it is not thus with God, his acts of grace are without repentance on his part, he never retracts or revokes them, never clogs them with conditions, nor finds out evasions afterwards; if he pardon, all is well and secure, he will never depart from it, unless the sinner depart from his repentance, and so exclude himself from pardon.

The *Italians* have a proverbial saying, that they will forgive an Enemy, but never trust him; for fashion sake they will seem to forgive, that is, they will cease to quarrel, or they will not directly revenge themselves, but they will only rake up the fire in its own ashes; they will retain a perpetual jealousy of such a person, and malign him; it shall not be said they hate him, but it shall appear they do not love him.

Thus

Thus, like those long burning Lamps which have been discovered in old Monuments, whilst they are kept close under ground they burn more slowly, but so much the more lustingly. So men suppressing only their passion, perpetuate it; whereas perhaps it was more desirable they should give it vent that so it might expire. But God is not of a vindictive nature; as we have shewed before, he needs not conceal his anger, because he can execute it when he will, and there can lie no necessity upon his affairs to tempt him to pretend reconciliation when it is not cordial; no, he is a God of peace and of truth, his mercies are as the great Mountains, stable and firm, those that repent he pardons, and those whom he pardons he loves; and those he loves, he will trust and admit them to honour, and treat them as friends, with the greatest security and confidence. By this means he demonstrates (1.) the greatness of his own mind, the largeness of his heart, and (2.) the infallibility of his wisdom; that he is above fear, and above surprisal; (3.) hereby he assures the great value he hath for true goodness, that it alone, and nothing else comparably sways with him: and hereby he lays the mightiest obligations upon men to be good, and to persevere so. Thus Augustus made Herod of a formidable Enemy to become a faithful Friend, and several others have made the like experiment. And now this would lead me immediately to the second Stage of this part of the Parable, namely, the accumulative kindness the Father shews to the Son; but I will crave the Readers

Levit. 19. 17. Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thy heart, thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy Brother, &c. The Jewish Interpreters take the meaning of the Law to be to this effect. 9. d. if thy Brother have offended thee, thou shalt not retain an old grudge in thy heart against him, but rather expollulate the matter, and vent your passion presently, than conceal and smother it against another time.

Joseph. Antiq. li. 15. c. 10.

ders patience a little whilst I make a few practical reflections upon this we have said already.

§ VII. And in the first place, besides all we have yet behind, this that we have discoursed hitherto represents to us the blessed and comfortable condition of justification and peace with God. *O blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, Psal. 32. 1, 2.*

To have all a man's debts cancelled, his follies past over and buried in forgetfulness, his deformities covered, his Conscience quieted, and the light of God's countenance to shine upon him; to have no frightful reflection upon what is past, no dismal prospect of what is to come, no old story ripped up, no former quarrel revived, no latent displeasure, no rancour nor jealousy harboured against us: This must needs fill a man with cheerfulness in all conditions, and bear him up above all adversities, above poverty, reproach, sickness, confinement, and whatsoever can befall us in this world. Such a man shall not need to resort to drink and jollity, to relax his thoughts, to divert his anxiety, to bear up his spirit; he hath comfort from within, a continual feast in his own Conscience. *Who shall lay any thing to his charge? it is God which justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died, — Who shall separate him from the love of God? shall tribulation, or distress, &c. Rom. 8. 33, 34, 35.* The sting of all these things is taken out, since God hath pardoned his sin.

But on the contrary, when a Man knows God is angry with him, and his own Conscience upbraids and dogs him, the sad remembrance of his many provocations terrify him, and the fearful expectation

pectation of wrath to come alarms him; he must needs be in a case like that of *Belshazzar*, when the fingers of an hand were seen writing upon the Wall over him in the midst of all his jollity, *His countenance was changed, his thoughts were troubled, the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.* All the entertainments of sense do little in this case; nay, they are flat and insipid, and the smiles of the world no whit cheer a man so long as God frowns upon him.

It was an ingenious device, whereby a Gentleman of this Nation represented his condition in a publick entertainment at Court; he sets out a Ship bitterly oppress'd by a tempest, and ready to perish under its difficulties; and in the mean while a Rainbow appearing, towards which this word is addressed, *quid tu speras? q. d.* "What am I the better for hopes and smiles, for Court-favour and countenance, whilst in the mean time my condition admits no delay, and I am ruined in my private fortunes?"

But as the torments of guilt are incomparably more severe than the afflictions of outward fortune, so it is far more unreasonable to think to allay them by the blandishments of the world, than the other by Court Holy Water. No, it is nothing but God's mercy in the pardon of sin that can alleviate the troubles, and abate the anguish of Conscience; and when he is pleased upon repentance to do that, then he saith to the Soul, as *Christ Jesus* said to the *Paralytick*, *Matt. 9. 2.* *Son be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;* or as the same our Saviour to *Zaccheus*, *this day is salvation come to thy house.*

2. Secondly, since God pardons sinners in that ample manner we have before express'd; i. e. so

frankly, as that neither the greatness, multitude, repetition, or other aggravation of sin hinders him; and so fully as that no old score remains upon record against the Penitent: it may raise in us great admiration of his infinite goodness, beget the most amiable notions of him in our minds, and provoke us to love him with all our hearts. So our Saviour concludes in the Gospel, that where most is forgiven, there must undoubtedly lie the greatest obligations of love and gratitude. The Apostle tells us, Rom. 9. 7. *That scarcely for a righteous man will one die, but for a good man some would even dare to die.* All God's Attributes of power, and wisdom, and holiness, are very amiable and lovely, but this of his goodness in forgiving sins comes most home to us, in that he doth not rigidly insist on his own right, but comply with our necessity, and relieve our misery. To give and bestow benefits upon us is goodness, but to forgive is greater, because here he divests himself of his own right, recedes from his own claim, and that for our unspeakable benefit. In short, he seems not to consider himself but us only, in the dispensations of his mercy: he is as good as good can be, and therefore there is all the reason in the world that we should love him as much as is possible. And one of the best and most acceptable ways of expressing that is that which

3. Thirdly, I make a third inference, viz. that we imitate this goodness and mercifulness of his; this is prest upon us by our Saviour, *Be ye merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful.* It is said of Cato, that the strict sanctity of his own life made him a severe and rigid Magistrate; he knew not how to pardon in other Men what he would not permit in himself. If God, who is a holy and immaculate Being,

Being, should severely animadvert our failings, we could not blame him though we were undone by it; nay, it ought to be the greatest wonder to us in the whole world that he doth not do so, considering the greatness of his Majesty, the justice and wisdom of his Laws, and such other things of this nature, as we have formerly represented. But it is the most absurd thing in nature, that we who are great offenders our selves, that have infinite need of mercy at God's hands, that we should be cruel and vindictive towards each other; that God should cover our follies, and we blazon those of other men; shall he pardon us worms, and we be remorseless towards our Brethren? doth he consider human infirmity, bind up the wounds of the contrite, so as to leave no scar or blemish behind, of all their former miscarriages? and do we rake in the wounds, proclaim the follies, uncover the nakedness and shame of our neighbour? is it tolerable for us to equal our selves with God, or are offences greater against us than against him? shall we dare to do what we dare not wish should be done to us? *Do not we pray, Enter not into judgment with thy Servants, &c.* and confess, *That if God be extream to mark what we have done amiss, that none can abide it;* and do we scrupulously weigh, severely aggravate, and rigorously animadvert the sins of others against our selves? doth God forgive us by talents, and we unmercifully exact the utmost farthing?

Indeed, we may observe it to be the genius and custom of evil men, to remember invidiously the faults which penitent men have forsaken, to the end that they may revenge themselves upon them for that change which condemns their own obstinate perseverance in such courses, or as hoping

to excuse or justify their constant naughtiness, by remarking the temporary compliance of those other with them, whose contrary course now shames and reproaches them : But it is quite otherwise with all good men, they partly out of a sense of humanity, partly to encourage men to repentance, and partly also to confirm and secure such as have repented, from all temptations to apostasy, draw a curtain over their former misdemeanors, and forget what they have forsaken and God hath forgiven; therefore if we will either take pattern by God or them, we ought to do so too.

Lastly, but above all the rest, the consideration of God's pardon, and the egregious circumstances thereof, should be a mighty encouragement to all sinners to repentance; when we remember how gracious a Father we grieve by a wilful destroying of our selves, how much he pities us, and longs for our return: what a serene countenance, hearty welcome, full pardon, gracious reception; and how innumerable and inestimable blessings we shall have poured out upon us at our so doing. And this brings me again to the second part of the penitent Son's entertainment, to which therefore I now proceed.

CHAP.
 I shall now endeavour to remember myself the things which I must have forgotten, to the end that I may revenge themselves upon them for that offence which condemns their own obstinate persistence in such courses, or as hoping

C H A P. II.

Of Sanctification.

The CONTENTS.

- § I. *What is meant by the best Robe : and that it is the usual phrase of Scripture to set out the ornaments of the mind by those of the body.*
- § II. *Sanctification (in different respects) both goes before, and follows after Justification.*
- § III. *Three remarkable differences betwixt the measure of Sanctification which God requires, and that which he accepts for the present : or the different stature of Grace before Justification and after it.*
- § IV. *The ways by which God works men up to those higher measures of Sanctification which he requires. As 1. by mighty obligation, working upon their gratitude and ingenuity. 2. By the efficacy of Faith. 3. By the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

§ I. **T**HERE is a never-failing spring of kindness and good will in Parents towards their Children, which flows with that life and vigour that nothing is able to dam it up or interrupt it so, but that if it be obstructed one way it breaks out and discovers it self another. If the Children prove singularly good and vertuous, then paternal affection bears a mighty stream, overflows all its banks ; the Parents feel an unspeakable delight and satisfaction, and their Children are then the Crown of their age, their joy and triumph. If they happen to be but tolerable, they are ready to interpret all to the best, and prone to heap blessings

and kindnesses upon them. And if they degenerate and prove very bad and undutiful, this though it checks the tide, yet cannot divert the current; for at worst they cannot cease to pity them. There is in like manner an everlasting propension in Almighty God to do good to men, insomuch that when they are very bad he pities them; as soon as they begin to be good he loves and blesses them, but when they become generously virtuous and holy, he takes complacency in them; and all these different degrees of divine favour we have lively represented to us in the Parable before us. But we are now upon the second of them, namely, the great and singular blessings which the Father frankly bestows upon his Son now that he hath repented of his extravagancy, and is reconciled to him. And under this rank we may reckon these three special instances.

First, whereas the Father observed his Son to return in a very pitiful plight, either quite naked, or at most covered with rags; he therefore calls for the best Robe and puts it on him, that not only necessity may be provided for, and his nakedness covered, but he will have him appear in an Equipage suitable to the Son of such a Father.

Again Secondly, whereas the Son in contemplation of his present distress and former miscarriages, had no higher ambition than to be admitted into the condition of an hired Servant; now the Father on the other side will have him adorned with the Emblems of a person of quality, and of a Son, and therefore puts a Ring on his Hand, which hath in all Ages, and amongst most Nations been used to denote either eminent quality, or singular favour.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, the Son in the time of his rebellion, amongst other misfortunes became a slave (as we have observed before) and amongst most Nations it hath been the custom for such to go bare-foot, and only Free-men to be shod; now the Father in token of his Son's emancipation, commands to put shoes on his feet.

All which three things together amount to this, That the Father having forgiven his Son upon his submission and return, now puts him into as good a condition in all respects as he was in before his rebellion. And from thence according to the Analogy of the Parable we may infer, that our Heavenly Father upon the sincere repentance of sinners is so fully reconciled to them, that they stand upon the same terms with him as if they had never sinned; they are restored to as good a condition as that of Adam in innocency. And we might content our selves with this general application, but that S. Chrysostom, S. Jerom, S. Austin, Theophylact, and the generality of the Ancients carry it further, and make a particular interpretation of these several passages; in conformity to whose judgments we will thus render the meaning of the three aforesaid favours.

1. By the best Robe is to be understood the excellent ornament of more compleat holiness and fuller Sanctification, which God works in, and bestows upon a sinner upon his reconciliation to himself.

2. By the Ring is intimated the gift of the Holy Ghost, which is conferred upon those men that are justified and sanctified as the pledge of their adoption, and earnest of their inheritance.

3. By

3. By the Shooes, the honour of being imployed in the Service of God for the drawing others home to him. The grounds of which interpretations, I will assign as I handle the particulars severally, and I begin with the first.

1. The Best Robe, *Stolam* (saith S. Jerom) quam Adam peccando perdiderat, stolam quæ in alia parabola dicitur indumentum nuptiale, The Robe which Adam lost when he sinned, and in defect of which he covered himself with Fig-leaves, that Robe which in another Parable is called the Wedding Garment. And S. Chrysostom, τὴν ἁλὼν, τὴν ἀνὸθεν ὑψίστης, τὴν ἐν τῇ οὐρανῷ, ἡ ἁγία πνεύματος, &c. The Garment of an heavenly contexture, the white Robe which they are clothed with that are baptized with the Holy Ghost and with Fire; agreeably herewith Theophylact, the best or first Robe, (for so the Greek word in the Text imports) that is, (saith he) τὴν ἀρχαίαν, the ancient Robe, which we wore before we sinned, that which the Scripture means, when it saith, put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, put ye off the old vicious habits and practices, and imitate the example of Christ Jesus, and put on the holy temper of the Gospel.

Whosoever hath been ever so little conversant in the Holy Scripture, cannot but have observed it to be the usual stile thereof, to denote both the inward qualities of the mind, and the outward accustomed actions of the life by the garments of the body; and it would be unnecessary, and therefore tedious, to recite the many passages there to be found to that purpose. But I cannot omit that in the Revelations, Chap. 19. Vers. 8. To her was given to be arrayed in fine linnen, clean and white, for

Chrysost.
homilia
Παυλῶν
78.

for white linen is the righteousness of Saints. By the Woman is there meant the Church of Christ, called the Lamb's Wife, whose ornaments are righteousness and holiness, and they are metaphorically represented by white garments.

And if we consider all the uses of Garments, there is nothing more exactly corresponds therewith, nor more fit to be figuratively expressed by allusion to them, than holy and vertuous qualifications. For if Garments are used for distinction, what makes a greater and truer distinction betwixt man and man than their lives and tempers? It is not being high or low, rich or poor, noble or ignoble, learned or idiotical, which makes so great a difference betwixt them, as when one is good and vertuous, and another vicious and prophane.

If Garments are for Ornament, and to cover our uncomeliness, what is there represents a man more lovely and beautiful than the Ornament of a quiet mind, a just temper, an holy life? and what disguises and deforms men like to Vice and Debauchery?

If again, Garments are for defence against the injuries of weather, and other accidents, what is there that gives a Man that security and confidence which innocency of life and sincere piety affords him? and on the other side, what exposes and lays a Man open to all the calamities of this life, and to the wrath of God in the world to come, but naughty and evil practices, proceeding from a corrupt and vicious temper? Wherefore there is both plain reason, and good authority of all kinds to make this application of the first favour, which the reconciled Father vouchsafes his returning Son, and to say that thereby is denoted in the figurative sense,

sense, that God when he hath pardoned the penitent, then confers further measures of Sanctification upon him.

§ II. But if it shall be said that Sanctification must go before Justification, inasmuch as though an Earthly Parent may be reconciled to his Son that is not truly good, yet God cannot be reconciled to sinners continuing so, or until they become new men; and therefore some other allegory is to be sought here, and not that which we (concurrently with the Fathers) have pitched upon. I answer, the doctrine is true which this objection is grounded upon, but the inference therefrom will not reach us, for I have shewed already, that some measure of real sanctification must go before justification and pardon, because God, though he bear a constant good-will to mankind, yet (as the objection well suggests, and we have acknowledged before,) is he not transported with any fondness towards any man's meer person, so as to be reconciled to him whilst he stands at defiance with himself, because he is a pure, holy and just Majesty, and consequently cannot without denying himself, and contradiction to his own nature, either delight in a vicious person, or hate a good man. And besides, if it were consistent with his nature, yet will not his wisdom, and the interest of his government of the world permit that he cause the Sun of his countenance and favour to shine alike upon the vicious and the virtuous, him that feareth him, and him that feareth him not. And therefore he requires of all those sinners that hope to recover his favour, that they have not only a serious sense of, and hearty remorse for their sins; but

but actual reformation of their evil ways, at least so far as they have opportunity, in which consists that repentance which we carefully described under the second part of this Parable. Notwithstanding, it is true also, that he accepts beginnings, and pardons as soon as the conversion is true and real, and before those vital principles of grace attain their full maturity and perfection. Wherefore being both an holy and a mercifull God, as his benignity on the one hand prompts him to receive such into mercy, who have sincere though weak beginnings of the divine life; so on the other hand, the purity and perfection of his nature puts him upon requiring fuller measures of conformity to himself in those he makes the objects of his mercy and favour, than what for the present he accepts of; in consequence of which it is, that having (as we have shewed) received the penitent to pardon, he then proceeds to make him a vessel of honour fit for his use, by conferring upon him further degrees of sanctification, i. e. putting upon him *the best robe*.

Agreeably to which sense speak these following Scriptures, John 15. 2. *Every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it that it may bear more fruit.* Ephes. 5. 14. *Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.* And again, Phil. 1. 6. *He that hath begun a good work in you, will also perform (or perfect, *ἁρμόζον*;) it till the day of Jesus Christ.* All which Scriptures plainly intimate thus much, that some measures of sincere sanctification go before justification, the full accomplishment of which is by the grace of God to be gradually attained afterwards.

* Nihil invenies re-
lius reſto
non magis
quam vero
verius;
omnis in
modo vir-
tus eſt, mo-
dus eſt cer-
ta menſu-
ra. Senec.
Ep. 65.
† Plutarch.
de virt.
moral.

It was amongst the well known Paradoxes of the Stoicks, *οὐδὲν τι ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακόν ἐστιν*, that all virtues were equal, and that all goodness consisted in piety, in a very point; which notion * Seneca confirms and explains thus, *That as there is but one truth, for that nothing can be more than true, and therefore no one thing can be truer than another that is true; so (saith he) there is but one rule of human actions, virtue consists in a certain proportion, which whatsoever exactly observes, is virtuous.* And agreeably hereto † Plutarch reports the saying of Aristotle of Chrys, that there could be but one virtue, which therefore he calls *ἐπιστήμη*, or the health of the mind. But notwithstanding all these sayings of that stubborn Sect, and whatever else may be pretended by such as tread in their steps, there is without doubt a great deal of difference between what God will mercifully accept, and what he may and doth righteously require; between those lower degrees of grace that may be sincere, and find acceptance for the present, and that generous state of holiness which God designs to bring men to by the methods of the Gospel: or to follow their Metaphor, as there is a vast difference betwixt Athletick health, and that proper for a student, so is there no less between the strength of a new convert, and the attainment of an old, stable, and well exercised Christian; and consequently allowing the sincerity of the former, there is still room for further improvements, and this fuller sanctification which we here understand by the *Best Robe*.

For the clearer eviſion of which, both be-
cause it may be of use to comfort beginners for
the present, and also to cure their sloth and secu-
rity for the future, I subjoin these three particulars

to lay open the difference betwixt the usual stature of beginners, and the highest attainments of great proficients in Religion.

§. III. 1. When a sinner is newly converted from his evil ways, although the change be very sincere, and such as in time will draw after it an universal reformation, yet usually it expresses itself at first, by a remarkable zeal against the most gross and notorious miscarriages which such a person hath been liable to, and doth not presently amend all the lesser deviations of his life, partly because perhaps he doth not yet discern them, and partly because it is possible he hath yet so much to do of the former kind, as to employ all his intention and power for the present. The new birth is frequently in the Scripture represented by the natural, and in nothing doth the resemblance hold more true than in this, *viz.* as in nature there is not a perfect man formed at first, with all his members, and in his just dimensions, but only a salient particle, a little fountain of life that bubbles up, and by degrees displays it self in all the curious lines of human shape; so here in the works of grace, there is a vital principle, a divine particle, that in its first essays draws only a heart or some of the great *viscera* of the new man, but being lively and vigorous, in process of time displays it self in all the functions of holy life. They therefore that talk of an instantaneous conversion in such sort, as to imagine that a man dead in trespasses and sins should presently start up sound and perfect, and without so much as his Grave-Cloaths about him, neither understand themselves, nor have any experience of the orderly and almost insensible progress of the divine grace.

In this *Seneca* places his third and lowest rank of virtuous men, *extra multa & magna vitia sunt, sed non contra omnia,* Ep. 75.

It is true, in every regenerate person there is from the very beginning, a resolution against all sin, a detestation of, and declared hostility against, all the works of the Devil; but the War is not finished as soon as it is proclaimed or commenced. He that fights against Principalities and Powers must War a great while, and perhaps have the fortune of the *Romans*, who were said, *prælio sepe bello nunquam superati*, they get ground dally upon the whole, though sometimes defeated in particular designs: there is no decretorian Battel, nor is the business decided upon a push; it is sincerely done to conquer our beloved lusts and greater enormities, though yet some smaller infirmities be not vanquished, so long as they are honestly resolved against; for it is well and wisely done, first to break the head and main body of the Enemy, and then it will be easie to glean up the straglers. If once the principal disease be remedied, the symptoms will by degrees be out-grown, and most men of that rank I am speaking of, find it a great while before they come to have nothing to do but to conquer wandring thoughts, imperfect duties, and beginnings of evil.

Besides, it is very considerable that sins are not only contrary to vertue, but to each other; and as it is usual with wise Princes against a powerfull Enemy, to associate not only their friends and ancient Allies, but also those they do not love, so long as they are Enemies to the common Enemy; so it happens here, that a Convert zealously combating against some one vice, in studious declension of that, insensibly slips into some degrees of the other extream, and then finds it a fresh difficulty, *vincere eos per quos vicisti*, to conquer that other infirmity by which he conquered the former.

To

To which purpose it is remarkable concerning that holy man *S. Jerom*; whilst he lived in the affluence of the City, and used a free conversation; he felt frequent temptations of the flesh, and setting himself with all his might to mortifie these; and to do it effectually, retired into a desert, that he might both take away the cause, and the occasions of those dangers; but whilst in that retirement he exercises himself to great severity and austeriety, he insensibly grew into a blameable asperity of temper, which needed a second labour to subdue.

I will not say, as some do, that as God would have some remainders of the seven Nations preserved amongst the Children of *Israel* in the Land of *Canaan*, to be continually as thorns in their Eyes, and goads in their Sides; so he orders it that there should be some remainders of the old *Adam* in us to keep us always humble and employed; for certainly God would have all sin expelled our natures. But this I say, that as *Israel* was truly in possession of the Land of *Canaan*, from such time as *Joshua* had conquered those powers that made head against them, and had put the chief Cities and places of strength into their hands, notwithstanding that a long time after some of those old inhabitants remained amongst them, and were no very good Neighbours; so I affirm that so long as there is not only a resolution against all sin, but a constant hostile pursuit of it, and that a Man goes on conquering and to conquer; such a Man is a true *Israelite*, though he have not perfected his conquest; nor can yet say with *S. Paul*, *I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, and therefore henceforth is laid up for me the crown of righteousness.*

But now forasmuch as God, both for his own glory and service, the comfort of the Convert's own Soul, and his greater capacity of the Kingdom of Heaven, designs to bring Men to higher degrees of sanctification than what he was pleased to accept of when he first received the Penitent to mercy, therefore he afterwards puts upon him the *Best Robe*.

2. It is to be considered that the beginnings of all things (that are any way notable especially) are wrought with pain and difficulty; insomuch that *nemo repente fit turpissimus*, *no man finds it very easy at first to do any egregious wickedness*. Men become evil by degrees, and there is proficiency even in the Devil's School; and therefore much more reasonably may it be expected that those that first enter into a strict course of virtue, should be sensible of difficulty in their undertaking.

Plutarch.
de prof. in
virt.

It was an ingenious answer which *Plutarch* reports to have been given by a *Lacedemonian* Tutor, when he was asked what he pretended to, and of what avail his indeavours were; *I make* (saith he) *that to become easy and delightfull which is of it self good and necessary*. It is true, *Christ Jesus* tells us his yoke is easy, and his burden is light, and without doubt it is so, but it is a yoke and a burden still, and no man finds it easy untill he have exercised himself to it: rewards and punishments set before us, and reason and resolution working thereupon will prevail with men to do their duty; but only practice and assuetude makes it become easy and familiar so to do; especially supposing (as we do in the present case) a man but lately accustomed to indulge himself in a course of sin, let such a man's conversion be never so real and hearty, however it cannot be expected that he should presently

sently do Christ's commands, and say they are not grievous. It is certain such a man (if he be what we suppose him, that is, sincere,) will resist his inclination, and change his course; but because it was lately a course, there will yet be an inclination towards it, and consequently a conflict and difficulty in avoiding it; for (as we said before) it is only one custom can perfectly supplant another, and only habit can imitate nature, and make easy: the cutting off our corrupt members is a hard task, till by time and degrees they become mortified, and then it is done without any considerable pain or difficulty. Whosoever hath any principle of divine life, or true sense of God in him, will not allow himself in the neglect of God's worship, yet he will find it no easy business to hold his heart intent and constant in it, till it have become customary and natural to him; and then it is so far easy and delightfull to him, that he knows not how to live without it. Now although that state which tugs at the Oare, and draws on heavily, may be sincere, because it discharges its duty honestly, though with great difficulty; and therefore finds acceptance with a good God: yet forasmuch as his intention is that we should become *partakers of the divine nature, and that it be our meat and drink to do his will, that the way of his commands be to us as our necessary food*, that we should do his will with that alacrity on Earth, with which it is done by the Angels in Heaven, that our will should be perfectly conformed to his, and Religion become natural to us, partly to the end that we may do him the more honour (for there is nothing doth so much reputation to the divine Law and Government, as the chearfull obedience of his Subjects) partly also that we may be the more fit for the

Kingdom of Heaven, (for those most easily fall in with the Heavenly Quire, who have practised their part before-hand) therefore since he desires that we should not only be not evil, but generously good; nor merely draw on heavily and uncomfortably, but fly, as upon the Wings of a Cherub in his service; it seems good to him when he hath pardoned a penitent to confer upon him greater measures of Sanctification.

3. A young Convert though he have all the parts and members of a perfect man in *Christ*, and should also be supposed in great measure to have overcome the difficulties which always attend virtuous beginnings, yet he is but a beginner, and must needs be conceived weak and feeble in his whole contexture; he is not only apt to be abused with Sophistry, and *carried about with every wind of doctrine*, but less able to bear the burdens and to resist the temptations he must expect to meet with; the traces of his former course are not yet worn out, and so he is the apter to return; he is not at the top, but going up Hill, and may easily faint or slip; he hath not such experience of the wiles of the Devil, but he may be imposed upon; he is not so flesht with victory, but his heart may fail him; in short, grace is rather a disposition than a habit in him, and vertue more an inclination than a nature, and therefore he may fall away. But there is a virile state of vertue attainable when duty is turned into nature, and that which is best in it self is also most pleasant and delectable. When a Man is so long exercised in the ways of holiness that it is as much a road to him, as the course of sin was, either heretofore to him, or is now to others; and neither the length of the race is tedious to him, nor the dispatch difficult; when

when a Man shall neither stagger in his choice, nor be flat and formal in his prosecution; he hath tasted the Grapes of *Canaan*, and never more longs to return to *Egypt*, but disdains the Flesh-pots, the Onion, and the Garlick thereof, as much as he formerly groaned under the servitude. Such a man having put on the whole armour of God, is strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and defies all the powers of darkness: the Devil himself is ashamed to tempt him, having been so often baffled by him; and he stands immoveable as a Rock, stable as an Angel, and all the Gates of Hell cannot prevail against him. Now because this admirable condition is both desirable and possible, and that which God designs to bring Men to, therefore he proceeds to superadd to the Convert further measures of sanctification.

Now for the way of effecting this, besides those secret ways of working which we cannot penetrate into, by which it pleases God to bring about this glorious design, there are these three ways following which fall within our understanding.

§. IV. First, there is nothing more plainly discernible in a Convert than that the first workings of the grace of God in his heart revive a true ingenuity of spirit in him, which is the very groundwork and foundation of all improvements; and then God being pleased graciously and freely to give him the pardon of all his sins, lays so mighty an obligation upon that ingenuity, as is of force to put all the powers of the Soul upon their utmost activity, and thereby the temper of such a person is marvelously raised and improved. * For there is a vast difference betwixt the efficacy

Παύλος
τοῖς ἀν-
θρώποις ὅ-
τις, καὶ
τῆς ἰδιότη-
τος αὐτοῦ
καὶ τῆς ὁ-
μιλίας. Just.
Mart. Ep.
ad Diog-
net.

By what
means the
further
sanctifica-
tion of the
Penitent is
carried on.

* *Psalm 119. v. 32. I shall run the way of thy Commands, when thou hast enlarged my heart. vid. Dr. Hammond. in loc.*

of a spirit of bondage, and the spirit of adoption: If the former may be able to restrain sin, yet it can never inflame men to generous goodness; or if that impresses a caution of offending out of apprehension of the wrath of God, the latter rises higher, and stirs up endeavour of returning love for love; the one is apt to enquire after the *minimum quod sit* (as they call it) the lowest measure of grace that will but serve the turn to avoid Hell; the other seeks *aliquid eximium*, and thinks nothing enough by way of gratefull return, and therefore courts occasions, and rejoyces in difficulties as happy opportunities of demonstrating his ingenuous sense of his obligations.

When *Cyrus* had vanquished *Cresus*, and having it in his power to destroy him, not only preserved him but imployed him, and made him privy to his Counsels, meer generosity provoked him to become not a true Prisoner, but a faithfull Friend and usefull Counsellor. But our Saviour gives us the most illustrious example of that I am saying, *Luke 7. 37.* in the instance of a certain Woman that had been a great sinner, who finding out our Saviour where he was at Dinner in a Pharisee's House, brings a box of very costly Ointment, and having washed his feet with penitent tears, wiped them with her hair and kissed them; she anoints them also with the precious balm she had brought for that purpose. The Pharisees murmured at the familiar approach and access of such an ignominious person; *Judas* grudged the cost, and all the Disciples wondred at the novelty of the business, but our Saviour applies himself to *Simon*, and expounds the business to him by a Parable, *verf. 41. &c. There was a certain creditor had two debtors, &c.* whereby he silences the murmurs of the one, and removes

removes the wonder of the other, shewing the power of gratitude, and the admirable efficacy of great obligation upon ingenuous minds.

Secondly, when God receives the Penitent into his favour, he gives him by faith a full persuasion of the great things in another world; the real and serious apprehensions of which are able not only to place him above all the charms below, and to make him disdain all the baits of the Devil, but also to transport him with love and desire, and to carry him with full sail in the prosecution of those incomparable glories thus discovered to him, and thereby marvellously heightens and improves him in holiness. So the Apostle, *Heb. 11. 1.* pronounces of faith that it is *substance, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*; that is, it makes those things that seemed meer Fables and Romances to other men, to be the greatest realities in the world; and those things that being looked upon at a distance seemed small and inconsiderable, and had little effect upon men's minds, now being made near and present are of mighty influence, as he shews at large Historically throughout that long and excellent Chapter.

For this reason it is that all the accomplishments of a Christian are ascribed to his faith, *Acts 15. 9.* *Having purified their hearts by faith*; as if that sublimed a man, and drew him off from his Lees, *2 Pet. 1. 4.* *There are given to us exceeding great and precious promises, whereby you might be partakers of the divine nature*; as if the objects of faith duly operating upon us were able not only to raise us above the World, but above our selves, and to transfuse a divine temper into us: For so he goes on, *vers. 5, 6, 7.* *Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, &c.*

the word he uses is *ἀνταγωνιστής*, q. d. faith will lead the dance to all other vertues, or do but set that on work; and it will draw on the whole *Encyclopædy*, and circle of graces.

It is matter of daily observation, that not only men's industry is increased (which is a great matter) but their parts also are raised and enlarged proportionably to the encouragements set before them; great hopes make great men, and fit them for great undertakings, insomuch that *Quintilian* inquiring the reason why the former Ages bred greater Wits, and more exquisite Orators than latter days, resolves it into this, That those times afforded the greatest honour and encouragement to them. And it is an ordinary remark in Historians, that those Princes and States have always the ablest Ministers, whose fortunes have presented to them the most honourable employments and greatest rewards. But it is more to our business to observe that although in the darker times of the Law there were some very great and admirable persons, who were the prodigies of the Ages they lived in, yet ordinarily Christianity ought to do and doth afford far the most and bravest Hero's, by reason of the mighty great and clear promises therein exhibited. *The Law* (saith the Apostle, *Hebr. 7. 19.*) *made nothing perfect; but the bringing in of a better hope did.* For shall not the glories of Heaven outshine the felicities of a Land of *Canaan*, and the belief of the one be as operative as that of the other? And what though the one be present, and the other to come? yet to every good man this is as certain as that, and to every wise man the unspeakable odds in the things, abundantly recompences that disadvantage of circumstances. What man that hath a persuasion of eternal life can choose but

but disdain the present life, further than as it is a time of probation for the other? and scorn that the mean pleasures and allurements here should interrupt his course thither: what difficulties will he not glory in, and what duties will he not perform to assure his interest therein? 1 Joh. 3. 3. *He that hath this hope purifies himself, as God is pure*, especially when a man shall find these things not only made certain to him by faith, but made near to him also. When he shall consider himself now in a fair way to those Cœlestial Mansions, and that every day he approaches nearer and nearer to Heaven. Now therefore he will *cast off all the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light*; when he remembers, Rom. 13. 11. *That now his salvation is nearer than when he first believed*, and finds that a little more exercise of faith and patience will bring him to his desired Haven.

Thirdly and lastly, our Heavenly Father puts this *Best Robe* upon the Son whom he hath received and pardoned, not only by the Ministry of his Gospel, and all the ordinary advantages of his Church and Family, but extraordinarily improves the sanctification of such a person, by the special superintendency, guidance and influence of his Holy Spirit. The consideration of which brings me to the next member of the Parable, *He put a Ring on his hand*; which expresses the second blessing the reconciled Father bestows upon his penitent Son; which we are to treat of in the next Chapter.

C H A P. III.

Of the Gift of the Holy Ghost.

T H E C O N T E N T S.

- §. I. *The difference between the visits or motions of the Holy Spirit, and the gift or residence of it: and that the Holy Ghost doth reside with, and inhabit very good men.*
- §. II. *The wonderful comfort and advantages thereof in four respects.*
- §. III. *That although some good men have no experience of this residence of the Holy Spirit, it is nevertheless certainly attainable in this life, and the reasons of that case. The peculiar qualifications of persons fit for the entertainment of this divine Guest.*
- §. IV. *How to distinguish the motions of God's Spirit from the impressions of Satan, or the results of our own temper.*

§. I. **T**He second favour which the Father bestows upon his Son after he is reconciled to him, is, *He puts a Ring upon his Hand.* This hath by the common consent of the world been symbolical either of freedom and ingenuity, of riches and affluence, of singular favour and respect, or of quality and nobility. Most of these things S. James bears testimony to in that passage of his, Chap. 2. 2. *If there come into your assemblies a man having a gold ring, and goodly apparel; and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment, and ye have respect to him in the gay cloathing, &c.* And for the rest,

rest, at the famous Battel of Cannæ, where the Romans suffered a total defeat by the Carthaginians, the greatness of the Victory was estimated by this (as *Livy* observes) that more than a Bushel of Rings were taken by the Conquerors from the Hands of the slain, whereby it appeared how many principal Romans and persons of Quality fell in the Battel. And thus the Father's putting a Ring on his Son, should signify in the general, his re-instating him in the quality and honour of a Son: But *S. Jerom*, *S. Austin*, *S. Chrysostom*, *Theophylact* and others, consider here more particularly, that a principal use of the Ring was for Sealing, as commonly bearing the image, impress, or cognizance of him that wore it, and consequently they apply this passage in the mystical sense to the gift of the Holy Ghost: *S. Chrysostom* expresses it thus; *δοῦναι τῷ υἱῷ δακτυλὸν ἐν χρῆτι αὐτοῦ. ἵνα ᾖ σφραγιστὴν καὶ ἀρραβῶνα τοῦ πνεύματος, καὶ ᾗ ὡς αὐτοῦ σφραγὶς καὶ αὐτοῦ πνεύματος.* *ἵνα τὰς ἐκείνου ἀρχὰς περὶ αὐτὸν διακρίνῃ τῶν κακῶν, ἵνα πρὸς αὐτὸν παύσῃται πᾶς ἐχθρὸς ἐκείνου.* Give my Son a Ring also, that he may have the earnest of the Holy Spirit, and carrying that about him, may be kept in safe-guard by it; that bearing my signet, he may both become formidable to all his enemies, and publicly appear the Son of such a Father. And this interpretation is the more natural, because this is the usual method of God's favours, that after he hath justified, then he further sanctifies, and for the completion of that gives his Holy Spirit.

It was the saying of one of the Ancients, that man is, *ἀμφοτέρωθεν Θεοῦ καὶ Δαίμονος.* The wager which God and the Devil contend about: But when a Man hath given himself up to sensuality, or any kind of sin, then the title is decided, and such a person becomes the Devil's peculiar; and on the contrary,

contrary, when he sincerely addicts himself to virtue, God recovers his right, and takes possession of him by his Holy Spirit: agreeably hereunto we read, Ephes. 1. 13. *After ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise*: and also 2 Cor. 1. 22. *Who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit*: and again Eph. 4. 30. *Grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption*. For the more clear understanding of which, we are to take notice, that God doth employ his Holy Spirit about men before conversion, and in order to it; so Gen. 6. 3. he is said by his Spirit to have *striven with the old world*; and after that in like manner with his ancient people the Jews, for Isa. 63. 10. they are said to have *vexed his Holy Spirit*: and in general to all sorts of men both Jew and Gentile, especially such as have been baptized into Christianity, the Holy Spirit applies it self, awakening Conscience, suggesting good thoughts, and giving check to their course of sin, insomuch that whatsoever degree or beginnings of good there is in any man, the Spirit is the first mover of it. For as no good can come but from God, so it is not reasonable to think that there is any man so despised by God, but that some overtures of good have been made to him; nor is it worthy of God to imagine, that this good Spirit doth quite abandon any Man upon whom it hath begun to work, till such person hath resisted, quenched, grieved, and at last drove it away from him. But this is not that address of the Holy Spirit which we are considering of, these are only the motions or visits which he vouchsafes to make (*pendente lite*, or) whilst it is yet undetermined, to whom men will ultimately belong. That therefore which we are concerned about is the peculiar
priviledge

priviledge of very good men, such as have cherished the motions, entertained the visits, and complied with the intimations of the Holy Spirit; and when it is come to that, from thenceforth he doth not visit them *in transitu* only, or call upon them, but resides and inhabits with them, and becomes as it were a constant principle, a Soul of their Souls: in short, they are the *temples of the Holy Ghost*.

This I take to be that which our Saviour means, Jo. 14. 23. *If any man love me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him*; and that also S. John in the name of our Saviour, Rev. 3. 20. *Behold I stand at the door and knock*, (which phrase signifies the previous and more ordinary motions of his grace) *And if any man open to me*, (*i. e.* if men attend to my admonitions and invitations, and break off their custom of sin which bars the door of their Souls against me) *then I will come in, and sup with him, &c.* (*i. e.* then I will be a familiar guest, or inhabitant with him) and this is both interpreted and confirmed by S. Paul, 1 Cor. 3. 16. *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? i. e.* being sanctified and made fit for the residence of that Heavenly Guest, he hath taken possession of you as his House and Temple: and more expressly yet by S. John, 1 Eph. 3. 24. *He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him; and hereby we know that he abideth with us by his Spirit, which he hath given us.*

§. II. Now this inhabitation or residence of the Holy Spirit is called a Seal, and men are said to be sealed by the Holy Spirit, because as seals use to denote propriety, so God hereby marks out as it were

were such men for his own; i. e. as those that he hath a peculiar concern about, those that have an interest in him and he in them; and this is of wonderful comfort and advantage, especially in these four respects.

1. The Spirit thus inhabiting men, gives them a title not only to God's care and providence, but to an inheritance of Sons, to a participation of that unspeakable felicity wherewith himself is eternally happy and glorious. So the Apostle concludes in the forementioned place, Eph. 1. 13, 14. *After ye believed ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the time of the purchased possession. q. d.* We are hereby assured of Heaven and glory hereafter, though we are not yet in possession of it: or, this is the pledge of our adoption, upon which the inheritance is entailed. Hence it is that the same Apostle, Rom. 8. 11. makes this an assured argument of our resurrection; *But if the Spirit of him that raised Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised Jesus from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. q. d.* You cannot lie under the power of death and the bonds of the grave, but God will assert you to life and immortality, because you have a principle of life, the Holy Spirit in you, which will as surely revive you, as it raised Jesus from the dead; for by his residence in you, you are marked out as belonging to God, and thereby he hath taken possession of you for himself.

When God owned the Tabernacle amongst the Jews built by Moses, and after that the Temple built by Solomon, and solemnly dedicated to him, for his House or Palace wherein to dwell amongst that people, it pleased him as it were to take livery and

Chap. III. *How the Holy Spirit a Seal.*

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and feisin, by the cloud which on the behalf of the Divine Majesty hovered over them, and was therefore not improperly called by the *Jews* the *Shekinah*, or *dwelling presence*; and God was said to *dwell between the Cherubims*, because there this symbol of the divine presence subsisted. And as in the Christian Church all those miracles which the primitive Christians were enabled to perform, were principally to assure their minds that God owned them; and although they were destitute of human help, and persecuted both by *Jews* and *Gentiles*, yet God was with them, in which respect the Holy Ghost is called *the Comforter* so often by our Saviour; I say, in those miraculous effusions of the Holy Spirit, the cloud as it were sat over the mercy-seat in the Christian Church, which was now departed from the Temple of the *Jews*, and denoted the collection of believers, both of *Jews* and *Gentiles* united under *Christ Jesus*, to be now God's peculiar Household and Family: So also to all holy men in all Ages God is present by his Spirit, by which they become *Temples of the Holy Ghost*; upon which the Apostle pronounces peremptorily, *Rom. 8. 9. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* Which I understand in this sense. *q. d.* He is not arrived at the excellent state of Christianity, that hath not experience of the residence of God's Holy Spirit in him.

Only this is to be remembred, that this residence of the Holy Spirit in good men which we speak of, is not to be judged of by miraculous effects, nor are such to be expected now, because those were proper only for the first Ages, when whilst the Church was under persecuting Emperors, and in its infancy, God thought fit by such
prodi-

prodigious displays of his power and presence to make all the world see his concern for it ; and that (as I said before) he had taken possession of it : but ordinarily, and especially in the case of private Christians, the presence of the Spirit with them, discovers it self by such effects as these following. For

2. The Spirit of God, though he doth not work miracles now, yet doth he not meerly take up his residence in the hearts of holy men, but actuates them, prompts them forward in all good Actions, helps and strengthens them in their duty, and inflames their resolution and zeal in all brave and generous enterprizes ; in respect of which we are said to be *led by the Spirit, to live and walk in the Spirit*. Which is not so to be understood as if what good was done, the Spirit did it for men ; nor much less, as if he hurried men on whensoever they did well, and so for defect of such motion were liable to bear the blame of their irregularities when they did evil ; for as on the one side he never moves but to that which is certainly good and agreeable to the standing rules of Scripture and natural reason, so neither on the other hand, when he incites to any such thing doth he over-power men, but he raises and actuates their native powers ; removes impediments, cures their sloth ; and in short, concurring with them, helps their infirmities ; with which agrees that forementioned observation of Cicero, *Nunquam vir magnus sine afflatu divino*, That there never was a brave Hero, nor any admirable performance without divine influence.

3. The

3. The Holy Spirit residing in the Souls of good men is also a spirit of confirmation, settling and establishing their Souls against revolt and apostasie, and giving a kind of angelical stedfastness to them; that ill examples shall not draw them aside, nor temptation prevail upon them; neither insinuations of false doctrine stagger them, nor prosperity and the blandishments of the world debauch them, nor afflictions and persecutions shake their constancy: for they are now *built upon a rock*; and *though the rains descend, and the waves rise, and the winds blow, they stand immovable*; or as S. John expresses it, *Rev. 3. 12.* they having overcome and obtained the reward of being under the conduct of this Holy Spirit, are now *made pillars of the temple of God, and shall go no more out.* To which add that of S. Peter, *1 Ep. 1. 5.* *They are ἐσφραγίσται, kept (in Garison) by the power of God through faith unto salvation.*

A great Example hereof we have in S. Peter, who trusting to inherent strength, fell shamefully and denied his Master; but after that he had received the Holy Ghost, he stood firm as the Rock on which Christ's Church was built.

4. Besides all which in the last place, it is usual with the Holy Spirit to fill the hearts of those holy men he inhabits with inexpressible joy, giving them the foretastes of the blessedness which they expect to enjoy hereafter; insomuch that they do not altogether live by faith (which is their usual *viaticum*) but in some measure by sense also, having a present glimpse of their future happiness, by means whereof they *rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*; they exult, triumph and applaud themselves in their interest in God, and their glorious portion with him.

The Holy Spirit carries men as God did Moses up to Mount Pisgah, to take a view of the good Land of promise, and affords them the prelibar-

ons of Heaven; the very relish of which blessedness upon their spirits puts them into a kind of ecstasy, that they feel not the troubles and vexations which may assault them from below; they triumph over mortality it self, and wish and long to die: when (like *S. Stephen*) *they see Heaven opened, and Jesus sitting at the right hand of God,* their face (like his) shines, and a glory incircles them; they seem to hear the blessed Quire of Angels, and are ready to join in the Allelujah: in short, their Soul raises it self, and would fain take Wing and fly thither presently.

This I think is that which is figuratively but excellently set forth by our Saviour in his Epistle to the Church of *Pergamos*, *Rev. 2. 17. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden Manna.* *Manna* was called Angels food, and as the *Jews* observe, it applied it self to every man's palate, and had that relish which every man desired: which admirably expresses the joys of Heaven, which are for the present the entertainment of Angels; and when Men come to enjoy them, shall fill all their powers, and leave no desire unsatisfied: And it is called *hidden manna*, because (as saith the Apostle) *it doth not yet appear what we shall be:* however, it seems some taste and anticipations of this shall those have in the mean time who overcome. But that which I principally intend is the next words, *And I will give him a white stone with a new name written upon it, which no man knows but he that receiveth it.* This passage some take to be an allusion to the custom at *Athens*, and some other Greek Common-wealths; where in capital causes especially, the Citizens gave their Suffrages by White and Black Stones; and when the number of White Stones was greatest, the person at the
Bar

Bar was absolved or acquitted. And thus the *white stone* in the Text should in the mystical sense import justification and pardon of sin. But this comes not up to the design of the place: and there is another custom which fits it better, and most probably was here alluded to by our Saviour; (*viz.*) it was in use that those which conquered at the *Olympick Games*, had a token or ticket given them, expressing their names, and specifying the reward they were to have for their achievements. In conformity to which our Saviour here seems to promise to those who acquit themselves manfully and bravely in the conflict, or race of Christianity, that they shall receive an inward and invisible pledge and assurance of the glorious rewards in the other world; which can be nothing else but this which we are speaking of, namely, the comforts of the Holy Ghost.

This is now the second Boon which our Heavenly Father bestows upon the Son he receives, and is a very great and glorious one. This is the admirable effect of our Saviour's Ascension into Heaven; the accomplishment of his promise, and the supply of his own presence to his servants till he take them up to himself. This is the glory of Christian Religion; that whensoever it is vigorously pursued, it yields this present advantage besides whatever is in reversion. And this is the mightiest encouragement to men to be generously good.

And although things of this nature partly because they are meerly divine favours, not naturally due to men, and so cannot be proved by reason; partly also being in their own nature invisible and transacted in secret, cannot be understood by the generality of Men who have no part nor lot in

this matter, but are apt to be looked upon as dreams and fancies (if not vain-glorious pretences and forgeries) yet that this we have been speaking of is a great reality there can be no doubt, unless we will reject both the testimony of God and the experience of the best of men; so that it may justly seem either unnecessary or fruitless to add any thing to what hath been already said on this point.

Notwithstanding, because I observe that there are two things which prejudice the minds of a great many Men in this business, I will endeavour briefly to remove them, and then pass on.

The first is grounded upon an observation that several good men have experience of no such matter; i. e. they are neither sensible of such a residence of the Holy Ghost in them, nor of any such ravishing comforts as are pretended to accompany such a glorious Guest: and therefore they are apt to suspect either all is fancy, or at best that it is only some great rarity not the common portion of God's Children.

Again, they observe that not only many good Men are without pretences to the Spirit, but many evil men lay claim to it, and therewith frequently cheat themselves; and besides, countenance their evil designs by it, and under that pretence do a great deal the more mischief in the World. Therefore though they do not doubt but that God might think fit at the first planting of the Gospel to give his Holy Spirit as aforesaid, because upon many accounts there was then extraordinary necessity for it; and also the Spirit then given was so plainly miraculous, and gave such proof of it self, that there could be no suspicion of cheat in the case: yet forasmuch as both these things fail
now,

now, (*viz.* both the occasion and the discrimination) they think it safer to reject all such pretensions, than admitting them, to lay open a way for so much cheating and imposture as may be reasonably expected, when there is no certain way of detecting it.

Now therefore if in the first place I can give a plain account how it may come to pass, that such Men as are supposed in the first objection may be destitute of such advantages of the Holy Spirit as we have asserted to be the tokens of his residence; and then secondly, if I shew also how to prevent all imposture, by distinguishing the operations of the Spirit from fancy and other allusions, then both the objections will be answered, and the Reader will not be offended with the digression.

§. III. And to dispatch all briefly, I begin with the first, to which I say, That as it is not usual with God to precipitate or prevent the course of natural causes, but to bless and succeed them in their due and proper order; so neither in his especial providence, or in the acts of his grace, doth he delight to work *per saltum*, but gradually, according to the condition of the subject, and its fitness to receive his impressions: accordingly though he be always ready to bestow his Spirit, with all the comforts and advantages thereof; yet he expects and requires all due qualifications and preparations before he confer it. Now there are these three especial qualifications for the reception of the Holy Ghost in the sense we speak of.

I. (As I have intimated already) that a man be not only purged from grosser pollutions, and begin to have a love of holiness, but that he be singularly pure, so as at least not to admit of any

voluntary transgression, and especially be above all sensuality of what kind soever. It is observable in that sad miscarriage of *David* (which we have often had occasion to refer to) that it made him justly fear, and therefore earnestly pray, *Psal. 51* that God would not thereupon take his *Holy Spirit* from him; and the Apostle when he is earnestly persuading the *Ephesians*, *Not to grieve the Holy Spirit*, whereby they were sealed to the day of redemption, solemnly warns them in the Verse before, *That no corrupt* (or obscene and filthy) *communication proceed out of their mouths*, as that which would assuredly argue their hearts to be no temple for the Holy Ghost; and again, in the verse after the forefaid Exhortation, he with the same earnestness gives them caution *against all bitterness, and wrath, and clamour, &c.* as intimating that those also defiled the Soul, and made it incapable of receiving the blessed Spirit. To which purpose the *Jews* have a common saying, *Super animum turbidum non requiescit Spiritus Sanctus*, *That the Spirit of God requires a sedate even temper as his quiet habitation.*

2. The Spirit of God requires a lovely, sweet and benign frame of Spirit, and abhors that *Hypochondriack* sourness and austerity, which yet some place a great deal of Religion in; when men will be always sighing and complaining, and peevishly refuse consolation. *Jonah* confidently told God he *did well to be angry*; and so these men seem to think they please God by grieving his Spirit. frowardly or at least phantastically resisting his consolations. But it is a mighty mistake to think the Spirit of God will comfort men whether they will or no; he requires a persuadable, counsellable temper, and such a disposition as will work with him; for to make a black melancholist comfortable immediately,

ly, is not to be done but by a phrenzy or a miracle, and for this last we are not to expect it now at God's hands : nay even the Prophet *Elisba*, when he desired to call up the Spirit of Prophecy, called for an Harp, that he might put his mind in tune, and dispose himself to become the instrument of the Spirit of God; and so it is here, an harmonious Soul added to the former qualification invites down the Spirit of God. Especially if

3. In the third place there be fervent Prayer joined herewith; for since God expects we should make our acknowledgments of him, and demonstrate the value we have of the mercy we seek by the importunity of our addresses to him, even then when we address our selves to him for common favours; with much less reason can we expect that he should bestow this great boon upon us, unless it be sought by ardent and instant Prayer: for so our Saviour hath told us, *Luke 11. 13.* that though he hath a Fatherly affection to give all good things to us, yet it is upon condition that *we ask him*. And *S. James* hath further explained to us the manner of asking, *Chap. 1. 6, 7.* that it *must be in faith without wavering*; i. e. neither as doubtfull of God's goodness, nor as if we were indifferent whether he granted our request or not; for (saith he) *Let not such a man think that he shall receive any thing at the hand of the Lord:*

Now forasmuch as the comfortable portion of the Holy Spirit is not intailed upon all the Children which God receives to grace and pardon, but that all these qualifications are pre-required; since it is also evident that some who perhaps may passionately desire it, yet have an unhappy temper that unfits them for the entertainment of this Heavenly Guest; and many others that have some good mea-

sure of sincerity, which God will mercifully accept in order to eternal life, are not yet raised to such a measure of holiness as to be capable of this favour at the present: It cannot seem strange that such should remain strangers to this most happy privilege, nor can it yet be reasonable that their want of experience of it should be any argument that there is no such thing to be expected.

§. IV. But then for the other difficulty, (*viz.*) how to distinguish the motion of God's Spirit from either the impressions of *Satan*, or the results of a man's own temper and constitution; I answer there are these properties of the Holy Spirit, which if they be attended to and laid together, will infallibly distinguish it from any other motion, and secure us from all allusion.

1. The Spirit of God never moves any man but in an action or course warrantable by the word of God: for since the Holy Scripture is given for a rule of our actions, and as such confirmed in the most ample manner by the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit should notoriously contradict it self, if it should contradict that.

Indeed, in former Ages whilst the mind of God was not intirely delivered, and consigned in holy Writ, there were frequent intimations of his pleasure by his spirit of Prophecy to supply that defect, and several special directions given upon emergencies; but then also it is to be observed, that such extraordinary interpositions were attended with miraculous circumstances, and thereby brought their credentials along with them, and gave assurance of their divine authority: but now those miraculous attestations being ceased, as well as the reason of them, whatsoever pretends to God, and

and is contrary to the Holy Scripture, is an illusion of the Devil. *To the Law, and to the Testimony, if they speak not according to this Rule, it is because there is no light in them, Isa. 8. 20.*

Secondly, the motions of the Holy Spirit particularly in comforting the hearts of holy men, are rational and accountable, and consequently of that are also even and constant. It is very ordinary for some men to be sometimes marvellously cast down they know not for what, and then raised up again they know not how, and this they ignorantly call the accessions and recesses of the Holy Spirit, or a *Plerophory*, and a state of desertion. Whilst there is nothing to alter the case, no change in themselves, neither of apostasie from God, nor of improvement in piety, yet their state of mind is altered, as if God changed, and not themselves.

But it is quite otherwise with the Holy Spirit, that never causlessly withdraws from men; it never grieves those who have not first grieved it, nor doth it arbitrarily give joy and consolation to the minds of men, but upon just ground and foundations, when there is a root and cause of it within, in their own Consciences. So *Erasmus* well observes upon that passage of the Apostle, Rom. 8. 16. *The Spirit witnesseth with our Spirits, that we are the Sons of God.* Συμμαρτυρεῖ, *Ut intelligas* (saith he) *geminum esse testimonium duorum Spirituum nostri & Dei, &c.* The Spirit doth not comfort against the sense of our Consciences, but concurs with, and confirms the testimony of our own Spirit; so that we may see, and understand, and can give account of our own joys. And consequently of this, these comforts are not flashy and uncertain, but stable and certain; like those effects that proceed from known and certain causes. The joy of such
men

men is not a blaze like a meteor, but *as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day*, Prov. 4. 18. But on the contrary, those that have their ebblings and flowings, their sudden and unaccountable dejections, and their as sudden ecstasies and transports, very unworthily impute these motions to the Holy Spirit, which are only fits of the body, and the several disguises of hypocondriack passions.

Thirdly, the Spirit of God in all its impressions upon Men is gentle, sedate, and governable; puts not Men into a rage, nor disorders their reason, but is manageable by it, submits to all decorum, and complies with all decency of circumstances. This is that which is thought by the best Interpreters to be the meaning of that remarkable passage of the Apostle to the Corinthians, 1 Ep. Ch. 14. vers. 29, 30, 32, 33. *Let the Prophets speak two or three, and let the rest judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For the spirits of the Prophets are subject to the Prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, &c. i. e.* (saith the Learned Dr. H. Hammond) even in those effusions of the Holy Ghost, and in the exercise of those extraordinary gifts, you may observe method and order. *For the afflations or inspirations of the Prophets here spoken of may be ruled by the Prophets, i. e. by them that have them; these Christian gifts being not like the afflations of evil spirits, which put men into ecstasies, &c. for the Spirit of God is not a violent, ecstatic, impetuous, but a soft, quiet spirit, &c.* And if it was so in those extraordinary impulses in the primitive times, much more must it needs be so now, when all those miraculous and prodigious circumstances, are ceased as I said before.

Therefore

Therefore wherever Men pretending to the Spirit, are raving and furious, and pervert all order and government, or wheresoever such persons shall under such pretences thrust themselves into the Ministry, or put the Magistrate out of office, shall take upon them to be reformers of the world, revile authority, run upon desperate attempts, or in short, wherever there is a *raging whirlwind* instead of a *still soft voice*, God is not there, but either the Devil, or at least a Phrenzy. And so much for that.

CHAR

C H A P. IV.

Of the great honour God doth to a true Penitent, putting him into his service, and the peculiar usefulness of such a person.

THE CONTENTS.

- §. I. *The great trust God reposes in those he pardons, and their obligations to faithfulness and activity in his service.*
- §. II. *Several ways whereby all good men may be useful towards the conversion of others, (without taking upon them to be publick Preachers) and their encouragements thereunto.*
- §. III. *The peculiar aptness of Converts from an evil life, to be serviceable to God in the reclaiming of others.*
- §. IV. *The Character of an accomplished Christian according to all the ornaments forementioned.*

§. I. **W**E come now to the third Ornament which the Father invests his returned Son with, *He puts Shoes on his Feet*, which were the habit not of Slaves, but of Free-men, as we have noted before ; but what is the mystical sense of this passage, or what favour on God's part towards penitent sinners is hereby denoted, is not altogether so easie to resolve upon : S. Chrysostom, and Theophylact, understand hereby the Grace of God, which defends the Convert from the temptations of the Devil ; *Put Shoes on his feet* (saith the former) *that the old Serpent may not find him naked*

naked so as to wound his heel, and that he may be able to tread upon the serpent's head, and have no disturbance in running the way of God's commandments: But S. Jeron, and S. Austin apprehend, that hereby is signified the honour that is put upon eminent Converts, to be employed by God as useful instruments of propagating his Gospel, and of drawing in others from the evil of their ways to submission and obedience: To this purpose S. Jeron applies that circumstance of the Passover, that it was to be eaten with *fruits in their hands, and shoes on their feet*, as well as with *bitter herbs*; as if the mystical reach of that Injunction was to teach us, that a Man delivered by the mighty power of God's grace out of *(Egypt)* (the state of servility to sin and *Satan*;) should not only solemnize the memorial of God's mercy with a sorrowful and bitter reflection upon his former folly and misery, but stand (as in *procurator*) ready to run on God's errand, and to call in others to him. And indeed, this same Metaphor is used in that very sense (according to the judgment of the best interpreters,) Eph. 6. 16. *Having your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace*, which seems to allude to that passage of the Prophet *Isaiah 52. 7. How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace*; and the intent of the Apostle seems to be to injoin a readiness to promote and set forward the Christian Religion: And in this sense I take it here, that when God hath pardoned a sinner, and sanctified and adopted him, he then fits him for his service, employs him in it, and expects from him that he become useful towards the reclaiming of others.

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A great Prince of the last Age had upon some displeasure cast an old Captain and a potent Minister of his into Prison, where he continued a long time without any hopes of restitution; until at length it happened that the great Monarch having projected the adjoining a Neighbour Kingdom to his own Dominions, thought none so fit to execute his design as the person he had long kept under a restraint; him therefore he sends for out of Prison, Pardons him, and Commends him for so great an affair, and found the success of his Courage and Conduct according to his own desires. It is not easy to say whether this action argued more the wisdom of the Prince, (who knew who was fittest for his turn, and could also submit his own passion to his interest;) or whether it was a sign of the necessity of his affairs, and of the scarcity of expert and able servants; but it is certain it was a glorious testimony to the gallantry of him he so employed.

Now though it be most evident that God stands in need of no man for the execution of his designs, yet it is as certain that in all the instances of his providence he loves to employ the capacities of his Creatures, and it is the greatest honour any of them are capable of to be so made use of by him.

And as for rational Beings who were at first designed, and admirably fitted for his Service, (as well as singularly obliged by innumerable favours to be faithful to his interest,) and yet have forfeited their allegiance and served against him: it is an instance of the most wonderful goodness that he should trust them again; for it was very much to forgive them, but to trust them, when (as I have noted heretofore,) it is become a rule of Wisdom amongst them not to trust one another in such a case,

is very admirable : and yet God doth both these, and more than all this ; for he pardons his ingrateful Rebels, he fits them for service, and then trusts them. Nay, it is oftentimes the aim of Princes when they employ one in any eminent service that hath been formerly faulty, to expose him to such difficulties, as that the hazard of the employment shall either revenge the former miscarriage, or at least make him dearly earn his restitution to favour. But God as he hath no ends of his own, nor seeks any thing from them he endeavours to reclaim, but their own good and happiness ; so in those he employs in any expedition, he peculiarly aims at their honour and comfort therein.

When a Man of God came to old *Eli* the Priest to threaten him and his Sons with the Effects of God's severe displeasure for their prophaneness, and the scandal they gave to his service : he expresses it in these words, *Them that honour me, I will honour ; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.* The import of which compared with the context plainly amounted to this, that as it was the highest honour and dignity to be admitted to, and to continue in a relation of service to God, so it was the greatest debasement (which that Family should undergo) to be thrust from it.

1 Sam. 2.
30.

The Prodigal Son in the Text (as we have seen) acknowledges his unworthiness to be called any more a Son, and desires to be admitted but into the lowest rank of *Servants*, and into so mean a condition, as that he was so far from expecting any honour by it, that he thought himself incapable of any trust ; but the Father honours him with the highest relation of a Son, and God honours penitent Sinners with the most weighty and important trust, putting shoes on their feet ; *i.e.* employ-

employing them in his Vineyard. *S. Paul* had a mighty sense of this, *1 Tim.* 1. 12. and breaks out into a passionate adoration of the divine goodness, *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer, &c.*

But we are not to understand any thing of this that hath been now said, as if all Converts were to be employed as God's Ministers in the publick dispensation of the Gospel; for God doth not give to all such those peculiar abilities which are requisite to the discharge of it, nor are all persons competent judges of the necessary qualifications thereunto; and therefore it is made a special office by God; which no man may undertake, but either he that is called thereto miraculously by God himself, (as the first publishers of the Gospel were) or by the orderly approbation and consecration of the Church; (as hath been the constant practice ever since.) All therefore that is hereby intended is partly to remark the transcendent goodness of God to his penitent Children, in that he is pleased to pass such a perfect act of oblivion of all their former enormities, as that he disdains not to admit even some of them to this highest trust and employment, (all their former demerits notwithstanding,) as we have had instance in *S. Paul*; but principally to recommend it to the care and Conscience of all those whom God hath been pleased to pardon, (that though they may not invade the office of the Ministry, yet) they ought to think themselves concerned to use their utmost endeavours (within their sphere) to be instruments of spiritual good to others.

This

and This seems to be the meaning of that charge of our Saviour to *S. Peter*, *Luke 22. 32. Thou when thou art converted strengthen thy Brethren.* Or if that be liable to exception, yet that of *King David* is not, *Psal. 51. 13.* who vows it as the fruit of his own pardon, that *then he would teach God's way unto sinners, and transgressours should be converted unto him.*

It is certain Religion never prospers well in the World whilst doing good is thought to be the office of some certain persons only, and not the common concern of all good men; nor will it ever be a good World till men think themselves obliged to be as charitable to the Souls of men as to an Ox or an Ass, and be as ready to help them out of the snare of the Devil, as the other out of a Ditch. And if it should happen that a Priest and a Levite should pass by a man slain amongst Thieves and wounded, yet sure every good Samaritan will have compassion on him, and bind up his wounds; especially he that hath been formerly a great sinner himself, and hath known by sad experience the deplorable ness of that condition, and found mercy at God's hands: (methinks) such a person should with warm affections and tender bowels, awaken that man into an apprehension of his danger, who is in the condition he himself hath escaped, and encourage him to try those mercies of God which he himself hath experimented. For if either a righteous man that never needed repentance, (i. e. such a change of his whole state as we have been speaking of) should be less sensible of such a man's case; or especially if a proud self-applauding Pharisee despise him, yet it will by no means become a Convert to be without compassion. For besides all other arguments to this purpose, it may be such

Y

a man

a man may have just cause to consider whether his own example (when he did go on in the way of sin) had not that pernicious contagion as to infect or confirm this man in his wickedness, which he sees him now lie under, and then it will not be only charity but justice which will oblige him to this duty.

It was the opinion (if I remember rightly) of *S. Basil*, that in Hell the torments of the damned are daily increased in proportion as the evil seed of their corrupt doctrine, (or the evil example) which they sowed whilst they were alive, fructifies upon Earth; but whether that be so or no, it is certain Men's sins are aggravated by the mischief they do to others, as well as by other circumstances; and therefore every such Penitent as we speak of, must think it his duty and concern, to endeavour to hinder the propagation of sin, and to stop the infection in others, as well as to destroy the malignity of it in himself.

§. II. Now there are many ways which an honest heart will find out of doing this we are recommending, without taking upon him to be a Preacher; *Solomon* tells us, *A wicked man speaketh* Prov. 6. 13. *with his feet, and teacheth with his fingers*: that is, though he say nothing with his lips, all his life and actions do teach and instruct the world in wickedness: and there is no question but that holy men may most effectually recommend vertue to others by their own practice and example. Example (1.) insinuates gently, works insensibly, but powerfully, (as almost all great Engines do ;) (2.) it relieves men's modesty, and yet shames their sloth; it (3.) kindles emulation, (4.) presses upon ingenuity, (5.) recommends the excellency,

lency, (6.) convinces the necessity, (7.) demonstrates the possibility of virtue. (8.) Besides, that there are a great many of the most curious lines thereof that are not to be described by the pencil, or that can be expressed by words, but are to be observed in the life and conversation of good men. For this reason (amongst others) it pleased God to send our Saviour, not only to preach the divine life to the World, but to live and converse with men, that by his example he might more plainly convince them of it; and for this cause also we solemnly thank God for the examples of all holy men that have gone before us.

And besides example, there are many opportunities and advantages, which good men have of propagating a sense of Piety and Religion, such as the authority of Parents, influence of Benefactors, interest of Relations, convenience of travelling together, Society of Commerce, and all other Bonds of Conversation. Every of which a mind inflamed with the love of God, and compassion to the Souls of men, will find usefull to this purpose. And this was the course *Moses* advised *Israel* for the keeping up a sense of God and his Laws in their minds, and the propagation of it to posterity. Deut. 6. 6, 7. *These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy Children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine House, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up, &c.*

And for the incouragement of all good men in this business, besides the great honour it is to be subservient to God in so important an affair, and besides the unspeakable comfort to our own Consciences, *If by converting a sinner from the*

evil of his way we save a Soul from death, and cover a multitude of sins, Jam. 5. 20. and that by such an act of zeal we have also the happiness to efface our own former miscarriages: Besides all this (I say) in present, we shall also advance our own glory and crown hereafter; for in the words of the Prophet Daniel, They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the Firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever, Daniel 12. 3.

It were very easy to enlarge on this subject, but that which is most pertinent, and the peculiar consideration of this place, is, to shew the particular aptness of those, that have themselves been converted from a wicked life, to be instrumental of recovering others, which I will briefly give account of in the following particulars, and so dismiss this point. And in order to this,

§ III. In the first place, it is considerable that those that are of sickly constitutions, are generally observed to be more pitifull and compassionate to the infirm, than those robust and healthy persons that scarce ever knew what sickness meant; and those that have long languished under any painfull infirmity, and at last have recovered, are both the best able, and most willing, to give advice to others under the same distemper. Upon which account it hath been the custom of some Nations (who had no professed Physicians) to bring their sick out into the Market-place, (where all persons that came were obliged by Law to take notice of them,) that by this means the experience of one that had escaped a disease, might afford a relief to him that now laboured under it. And so it is reasonable to think, that those who have

*Babylonis
ap. Herod.
dot. in Clis.*

have been sick in sin, and of sin heretofore, must needs by their own experience know the baits that allure Men, the charms that bewitch them, the fallacies of *Satan* that impose upon them, the folly and perverseness that defixes Men in that unhappy estate; the workings of passion, the regret of Conscience, the thoughts and reasonings, the objections, the prejudices, and the very inside of other Men in that condition. And therefore, as God commands *Israel*, *Exod. 23. 9. Thou shalt not oppress a stranger, for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt:* i. e. they knew what injuries, oppressions, infolencies and affronts a stranger was exposed to; and what fears, anxieties, and jealousies, he must needs be always under; and therefore it having been their own case, they ought to think it reasonable to pity such: so in the present case, the Convert is furnished both with more observations to render him serviceable to the conversion of Souls, and more compassion to apply and make use of his experience to that end.

Therefore *S. Paul*, though he was execrated of his own Countrymen, because he forsook *Moses* to follow *Christ*, yet shewed more dexterity in refuting their prejudices, and more tenderness to their Souls than any other Apostle: and particularly *Rom. 9. 1, 2, 3.* he expresses himself thus. *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great sorrow and heaviness in my heart. For I could wish that my self were accursed from Christ for my Brethren, my Kinsmen, according to the flesh, &c.* Where whatever he mean by the expression of *being accursed from Christ*, he certainly describes the deepest compassion that a mortal breast is capable of; and

that he had a sense of this towards his Brethren, he confirms by the most solemn Oath that can be made. I need not here add (because I have touch- ed that before) that such persons are also filled usu- ally with the greatest zeal of God's glory (whom they have formerly dishonoured,) and the greatest indignation against sin, (by which they have been abused,) and think themselves obliged to a double diligence, by the consideration of their former dis- service, of all which S. Paul is also an example, 1 Cor. 15, 10. *I laboured more abundantly than all the rest, &c.* But I observe

In the second place, such persons as have been formerly notorious for a course of wickedness, and now are become sincerely good and vertuous, are a standing reproof of the folly of sin; nay, I may call them the very credential Letters of virtue, and convincing arguments of the necessity of conver- sion, and such as strangely awaken men to consider their own station.

Simpl. in
Epiq.

It was a very good Plea that the Platonist makes for virtue in these words. Ὅτι εὐτυχίας δακτύλῳ ἡ σω- φροσύνη τῷ σπουδαίῳ ἥπερ ἡ ἀκαλασία τῷ φαχθηρῷ, δὲ τοῖς τὸ πολλὰς μὲν τοῦ φαχθηρῶν εἰς σὺφρονας μεταβάλλουσιν, τὰς δὲ σὺφρονας μὴ δύναται μεταπίπτειν εἰς ἀκαλασίαν, &c. *That the ways of virtue are more pleasant to a good man, than the ways of sin and licentiousness are to an evil and vicious man (and therefore more amiable and bet- ter in themselves) appears (saith he) by this, that several men who have tasted all the pleasures of sin forsake it, and come over to virtue; but there is scarce an instance to be found of the man that had well experimented the delights of virtue, that ever could be drawn off from it, or find in his heart to fall back to his former course. But to see a man that had ran into all excess of riot, to tack about to a quite*

quite contrary course, from a Drunkard, to become sober; from lascivious to become chaste and modest; from a covetous person to become charitable; from prophaneſs, to ſet himſelf to read and ſtudy the Scripture; and from curſing and blaſpheming, to bleſs and pray: and this change to be wrought in health and ſtrength, without the check of a Sick-bed, or the dreadful apprehenſions of approaching death: I ſay, this ſpectacle cannot but be a moſt convincing argument of the neceſſity of repentance to all ſuch as are yet in the gall of bitterneſs, and under the bonds of iniquity.

Laſtly, (to ſay no more) ſuch perſons ſo changed as aforeſaid, are ſtanding Monuments of the divine mercy, and of the powers of the Goſpel, and irrefragable arguments of the poſſibility of recovering the greateſt ſinners, if they be not wanting to themſelves, or rather if they do not chuſe their own deſtruction. For they proclaim aloud the greatneſs of the divine goodneſs, the largeneſs of his heart, the openneſs of his arms; and they upbraid the ſinner of folly, of madneſs, of cruelty to himſelf if yet he perſevere. It is ſaid *Miltiades* Trophies would not ſuffer *Themisto*cles to ſleep; and *Caſar*'s thoughts continually upbraided him with the great exploits *Alexander* had effected in a few years. But when a ſinner ſhall obſerve ſuch a man that was as fooliſh as himſelf, to become wiſe and ſober; one that ran in the ſame race, and was as near the Pit of Hell as he, eſcaped, and himſelf ſtill upon the brink of it; when I ſay, he ſhall conſider, that ſuch a man that had all the temptations, pretences, excuſes, examples, and every other inſtance of debauchment that himſelf hath, to find juſt reaſon to break through thoſe obſtacles, and by the mercy of God to be ſaved,

saved, and as a *fire-brand plucked out of the fire*, certainly if any thing in the World can move him, this must make him look about him.

In the sixteenth Chapter of this Gospel, our Saviour introduces a certain rich man in Hell, interceding with *Abraham* that *Lazarus* might be sent from the dead to preach repentance to his five Brethren, supposing that though they would not hearken to *Moses* and the Prophets, yet such a spectacle, and so certain intelligence from the infernal Regions, must needs rouse them: Father *Abraham* denied his request, and (God doth not use to gratifie such curiosity.) But indeed, if a man consider well, it is almost the same thing, when God affords us an example of a man that was dead in trespasses and sins, and under the very torments of Hell in his Conscience, but now redeemed and recovered by the grace of God, and sends him to preach repentance to us. And I think I may say in this case as the aforementioned *Simplicius* said of the discourses of *Epictetus*, *Εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ μόνος ἀνὴρ ὃς ἀποκαταστάσει τοὺς ἄλλους*. i. e. *The man that is incorrigible under such a powerfull remedy, there is nothing but the very torments of the damned can work upon him.* And so much also for that point.

Simp. in
Præf. ad
Epist.

§. IV. We have now seen severally the three Ornaments the Father puts upon his returning Son, and the favours God bestows upon a sincere Convert represented by the *Bisshope's Robe*, a *Ring on his Hand*, *Shoes on his Feet*. Let us now take a view of them all together; let us I say, make a stand a little, and see the Son in all his new attire; I mean, let us suppose all these favours of God bestowed upon some pardoned sinner, and then take notice

notice what a brave and excellent person such a man will be.

It was a noble Character which the Historian gives of Marcus Cato, *homo virtuti simillimus, per omnia diis quam hominibus propior; qui uno quam recte fecit ut facere videretur, sed quia aliter facere non potuit.* Cato (saith he) was ver-
Vell. Pa-
terc. Hist.
lib. 2.

ture drawn to the life, and the resemblance was so exact, that it was hard to say whether vertue animated Cato, or Cato gave subsistence and visibility to ver-
A brief de-
scription of
a perfect
Christian.
 tue; nay, such was the unshaken greatness of his mind, and the purity of his life, that he seemed more to par-
 ticipate of divine perfection than of humane frailty; for he was both so far above all temptations of doing evil, and also free from the alloy of mean ends and designs in doing good, that it seemed a kind of ne-
 cessity of nature in him to do well. This was bravely said, had it not been somewhat too Romantick. But the man we are speaking of (under the afore-
 said qualifications) must as much out-go Cato, as he outstripped other men; or rather as much as the advantages of Christianity out-went those of Philosophy. For this man is not only improved by humane discourse, but raised by divine revela-
 tion, and governed by the wisdom of God; is not under the faint and fluctuating hopes which reason can suggest, but under the assurances of faith; is not only eminent for some one or more vertues, but being inflamed by the love of God, and the pro-
 spect of Heaven, he breaths nothing but greatness and glory; wherever he goes, God is in his Heart, Heaven is in his Eye, joy in his Countenance; and he spreads the sweet odours of Piety, and casts a lustre upon Religion.

For

For in the first place, he is sanctified through-
out, the Image of God is restored upon him, and
Christ Jesus formed in him: All the maims of his
fall are cured, the confusion of his powers recti-
fied, the tyranny of custom vanquished, his Con-
science is inlightned, his reason raised, his passions
subdued, his will set right, and all the inferior
powers obedient. Vertue is made natural, easie
and delightful to him, and it is *his meat and drink*
to do the will of his Heavenly Father.

Furthermore, to assure his station, he is confir-
med by the grace of God, and upheld by divine
power; he is the peculiar care of God's Provi-
dence, the special charge of the holy Angels, and
the Temple of the blessed Spirit; all God's dispen-
sations provide for his safety, consider his strength,
and work for his good. The Devil is so restrained
that he shall not *tempt him above what he shall be*
able to bear, and hath not so little wit with his
great malice, to attempt where he is sure to be
foiled. Persecutions may assault him, and flatter-
ies may undermine him; prosperity may indea-
vour to blow him up, or adversity to crush him
down; raillery may go about to shame him out of
his course, or buffoonry to laugh him out of it;
but his race is as certain, as that of the Sun, or
the Stars in the Firmament, and his foundation
sure as the Mountains, *for he knows whom he hath*
believed.

Again, he is adopted a Son of God, and sealed
by the Holy Ghost *to the day of redemption*; he
feels himself quickned by his vital presence, warm-
ed with his motions, and assured by his testimony.
This erects the *hands that would hang down*, and
strengthens the feeble knees: this lifts up his head
with joy, because he knows his *redemption draweth*
nigh,

nigh. Every day he walks, he finds himself a days journey nearer Heaven; therefore he sets his face thitherwards, he puts on the habit, the mien, the joy, the very heart of Heaven: he goes up by contemplation, and views it; he ravishes his heart with the sight of it; he falls into a trance with admiration, and when he comes to himself again, cries out, *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.* He needs nothing, he fears nothing, he despises the World; life is tedious, death is welcome, *to be dissolved and to be with Christ is best of all.*

What can trouble him that hath peace in his Conscience? what can disturb him that hath Heaven before him? what can dismay him that is secure of immortality? what can affright him whom death cannot hurt? and what can deject him that is sure of a Crown of Glory?

And lastly, no wonder if after all this, such a man be active and vigorous for God, if he be used by God, and become his Embassador, *beseeching men in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God.* For all those comforts and encouragements afore-mentioned enlarge his Soul like an Angel, put Wings upon him like a Cherub, and set him on fire like one of the Seraphims, with holy zeal of God's glory and the good of men. Therefore with *David* he tells the unbelieving World *what God hath done for his Soul*; and with his Lord and Master *Christ Jesus*, he goes about doing good; and in this flame of holy love is contented to offer up himself *a sacrifice of a sweet smell to God.*

Here is *adulta virtus*, Religion and Piety at their highest pitch and fullest maturity that is attainable in this World; the next step is Heaven, one degree more commences Glory. Let the envious World now (if they dare) reproach Religion

glion as Hypocrisy, or as meer pretences and great words; when they observe that this glorious state is the design and the attainment of it, whenever it is wisely and worthily prosecuted; or let them say, all this is impossible, who as *Tully* well expresses it, *Ex sua ignavia & inertia, & non ex ipsa virtutis robore existimant*. These things are no Romances, nor have I dressed up any *Legendary Hero*: the things are true and real; *Thus (shall it be done to the man whom God delights to honour*. All this hath been attained, and might be attained again, would Men but cease to take up an opinion of their own goodness from the extream badness of others, and take their measures rather from the rules, and motives, and assistances of the Gospel, than from the examples and customs of the World; then without doubt others besides *S. Paul* might be able to say, *I have fought the good fight; I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, from henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing, 2 Tim. 4. 7. 8.* And that brings me to the last instance of the Father's kindness, and the top of that glory which God bestows upon truly good men.

G. H. A. P.

CHAP. V.

The splendid Entertainment, or the joys
of Heaven.

S. Luke Chap. 13. Vers. 23.

*And bring hither the fatted Calf, and kill it, and
let us eat and be merry.*

The CONTENTS.

- § I. The peculiar intendment of this passage of the Parable. That by the feast upon the fatted Calf are represented the joys of Heaven.
- § II. The several figurative expressions which the joys of Heaven are set out by in holy Scripture, (viz.) Paradise, Rest, a City, a Kingdom, a Feast.
- § III. A more plain and literal account of the felicities of the other world; especially in four particulars.

1. The Resurrection of the Body.
2. Provision of objects fit to entertain and satisfy all the powers both of Soul and Body.
3. The eternity of that state of life and happiness.
4. The blessed presence of God and our Saviour, and the happy society of Angels and Saints.

§ I. **I**T was thought to be a just civility amongst the more soft and voluptuous Nations (especially those of the East) that those who were to be the Guests at a Feast should be as curious in the preparation of themselves for the solemnity, as he
that

*Vide Stuc-
kium de
Convulib.
2. cap. 24.*

that made the entertainment was for their accommodation; and for that cause usually a considerable time of notice was given them before-hand, that they might be in such circumstances as should both do honour to him that invited them, and also render them grateful to all the society: upon which account, they were wont to bathe, anoint, exercise, and perfume themselves before-hand: and amongst other curiosities, to put on a habit which was both sumptuous, and significant of respect. Agreeable whereunto is that passage in the Gospel, *Matt. 22. 11.* where the Master of the Feast takes it extream ill of one of his guests, that he appeared there *not having on a wedding garment.* And with this accords the contrivance of this Parable; for the Father having (as we have seen) put his Son into a fitting garb, now proceeds to his entertainment; which is the third and last expression of his reconciliation. *Bring hither (saith he) the fatted Calf, &c.*

That he intends a Feast for joy of the recovery of his lost Son is very plain, wherein he designs that all his Family shall bear a part with him; the fatted Calf being the ancient most sumptuous treatment, as appears *Gen. 18. 7.* for therewith *Abraham* solemnly entertained the three Angels that came to visit him in the habit of way-faring men; and as the afore named *Struckius*, and the learned *Bochart* observe, there was not a Feast of old times, especially amongst those mentioned by *Homer*, where this was not the principal Dish: and the Text lays the Emphasis of a double Article upon it here in the Parable. But what is mystically meant by this passage, or what peculiar favour of God to penitent sinners our Saviour intends hereby to express, is not very easie to determine.

In the foregoing particulars we have had the concurrent opinion of the Fathers for the countenance of our applications; but here I doubt we shall be deserted by them, and therefore if we walk alone must proceed the more warily.

The Ancients agree in the general, that hereby is to be understood the great and inestimable gift of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. Πότον μόνον ἄγειν, οὐκ ἔστιν (saith S. Chrysostom) ὅτι ἡ δαίμων Μάγια τῆς διόξυλων, &c. *What fatted Calf doth the Father call for? What but his only Son born of the Virgin Mary, &c.* And in like manner the rest, only with this difference, that S. Chrysostom especially applies it to the Sacrifice of *Christ* represented in the Sacrament, and S. Austin to the same *Christ Jesus* preached in the Gospel; but with the leave of such great men, it may perhaps seem reasonable to pitch upon another interpretation, namely, that hereby is meant the joys and glories of the Kingdom of Heaven; for the confirmation of which I offer these following considerations.

First, it is well enough known that the Jews had commonly such a crass notion of the happiness of the world to come; as to think it to consist in the pleasures of the Body, and particularly of eating and drinking; agreeable to which is the fable amongst them of *Behemoth* and *Leviathan*, the one a prodigious Beast, and the other a Fish; which together with great quantities of delicious wine, they report to be laid in store by God, for the entertainments of the life to come; which ridiculous conceit of theirs seems to have given countenance, if not rise, to the sensual Paradise of the *Mohumetans*, and some of the Eastern Nations. And though *Menasse-Ben-Israel*, a late learned Jew, endeavours to mince the matter, and

Menasse-Ben-Isr. de Resurrect. lib. 3. cap. 9.

to

to turn the story into an Allegory, yet he confesses, and strongly contends, that a great part of the Paradisiacal felicity must consist in the pleasures of eating and drinking. Now it is no strange thing to imagin, that our Saviour speaking to the Jews, should make use of their own language, and allude to their customs and conceits, how gross soever they were.

And that he did so, will be the more probable if in the second place we consider, that he compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a Feast, *Matt. 22. 2.* that he tells his Disciples he will *drink no more of the fruit of the vine till he drink it new with them in his Father's Kingdom*, *Matt. 26. 29.* and allowed the expression of him that esteemed it to be the greatest blessedness *to eat bread in the Kingdom of Heaven*, *Luk. 14. 15.*

Thirdly, Even in this very Chapter, our Saviour telling us there is joy in Heaven at the Conversion of a Sinner, *vers. 7.* and amongst the holy Angels, *vers. 10.* he by those expressions invites and leads our thoughts to this sense, and in this very Parable, *vers. 25.* the entertainment of the penitent is expressed as accompanied with dancing and mirth; by all which, he seems to give us sufficient ground to think the entertainment we are now speaking of is no other than that of the joys of Heaven.

But especially if we observe in the last place, that the order of the Parable requires such a sense of these words as this we have suggested. For according to the Scheme of the Parable, God having been hitherto represented, as bestowing all those favours and blessings upon the Penitent, which render him fit for, and capable of Heaven, (as we have seen already) what can now follow more properly,

perly, or what would one expect to be intimated in the next place, but that he should thenceforward be described conferring that happiness, and actually placing him in that state he had by all his former unspeakable favours made way for. Besides, God's giving his Son is the foundation of all his other favours, and our Saviour's giving himself for us, is the meritorious and procuring cause of justification, adoption, sanctification; the giving of the Holy Ghost, and all the great things forementioned; and therefore it would not be agreeable to the wisdom of our Saviour in the contrivance of this scene, to represent this in the last place, when all those benefits which flow from it had before been supposed to be conferred. This therefore upon the whole matter seems to be the intent of our Saviour in the words we are upon, to performe our Heavenly Father, Crowning all those former gifts he had bestowed upon sincere Converts in this life, with glory and blessedness, and the joys of Heaven, in the Conclusion. As if in the literal sense the Father of the Prodigal Son had said, "I remember the misery, the hunger, and hardship my Son hath endured; and I pitied him, even then when he well deserved all he suffered; but since the time that I have seen him returning, not only the pale looks, sharp Countenance, dejected Eyes, and all other arguments of his former Calamities which I have observed in him, run in my mind, but I think also of the conflicts he hath had with himself upon the point of returning; fear turning him back, and hope encouraging him to go on; and the latter with great difficulty vanquishing the former: methinks I see the anguish of his mind, his indignation against himself, his shame for his own folly, and

“ the awful reverence he had of my presence, be-
 “ tween all which I know how his heart panted
 “ and laboured, till at last the reviving sense of his
 “ duty, and the confidence in the benignity of a
 “ Father carried him through. And now that he
 “ is returned, it is not fit to heap sorrow upon sor-
 “ row, I will wipe away all his tears, and repair
 “ all his sufferings; he shall take his fill of refresh-
 “ ment, not only my heart but my hand, my purse,
 “ all my stores are open to him. I have forgotten
 “ his rebellion, and he shall forget his sorrows;
 “ he hath by this last act effaced the memory of
 “ what he had done, and I will take care there
 “ shall remain no marks of what he suffered; and
 “ because all my family heretofore sorrowed for
 “ him, they shall all now rejoyce with me and
 “ him. Enter O Son into thy Father's joy; reap
 “ now the fruits of thy repentance; I am satisfied
 “ with thy return, satisfy thy self in this, that
 “ all I have, and all that belong to me, shall speak
 “ thy welcom.

Or as if in the mystical sense our Heavenly Fa-
 ther should thus bespeak his penitent Children:
 “ I am sensible as well as you what Husks you
 “ have lived upon since you forsook me, and when
 “ you neither loved me nor your selves, I pitied
 “ you; it was a long time before you would un-
 “ derstand, that in forsaking me you departed from
 “ your own happiness; and now that you have
 “ believed that it was good for you to return, you
 “ shall not find your selves deceived, your own
 “ experience shall justify your choice; you came
 “ indeed late into my Vineyard, yet I will re-
 “ ward you equally with those who have born the
 “ burden and heat of the day; and though it was
 “ a great while before you would be perswaded
 “ over

over to my side, yet now having acquitted your selves well I will crown you. I have already set some marks of favour upon you, but those are but earnest of greater which I intend you; and that you may be sure I sought not my self but you, when I put the task upon you of living vertuously and holily, it shall now appear, that I only educated and trained you up in that School for glory. And now that I have by these preparations fitted you for it, enter into the joy of your Lord; you shall not have only the ornaments but the inheritance of Sons, and shall partake of the same blessedness which my most dutifull Children (that never went astray from me) and which I my self am happy in; Isa. 23. 6. *For in this mountain will I make unto all my servants a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the Lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the Lees well refined, &c.* Come ye blessed, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, live with Saints and Angels, and rejoyce with them to all Eternity.

S. II. But to render this interpretation of this passage in the Parable the more clear and satisfactory, and also to make way for some account of the admirable greatness of this favour; let us take a little compass, and in the next place consider the several phrases that the state of celestial happiness is expressed by in Scripture; and the most remarkable are these four: it is called *Paradise*, a *Rest*, a *City*, a *Kingdom*.

In the first place it is described under the notion of *Paradise*, which imports a Garden of Pleasure; ^{Luk. 23.} and this name took its rise from that place and condition in which Almighty God settled our first Pa- ^{43.} ^{2 Cor. 12.} ^{3.}

rents, when they came immediately out of his hands: and as there he had ordered all things to be at hand, which ministred either to Man's necessity or delight, and had fenced him from all that could disturb and annoy him; so it is here, but in a far higher degree both of gratification and security, as we shall see by and by.

2. It is called a Rest, Hebr. 4. 9. *There remaineth a rest for the people of God*; alluding to the Land of *Canaan*, where God gave the Children of *Israel* rest and quiet habitation after a long servitude in *Egypt*, and a tedious Pilgrimage through the Wilderness. So in the World to come, God gives all good Men repose from all the troubles of life, and from all the solicitation and disturbances of their Enemies of all kinds. Rev. 14. 13. *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours, &c.*

3. It is called a City, Hebr. 11. 10. *A City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God*. In opposition to that temporary and sitting accommodation which the Children of *Israel* had in the Wilderness; and to note the stability and perpetuity of the state of those that have finished their course, and attained the Crown of Immortal Life.

4. It is also called a Kingdom, Matt. 25. 34. *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit a Kingdom, &c.* Principally as a Kingdom speaks grandeur, and glory, and affluence of all things, far beyond the reach and capacity of a private fortune; and so in the World to come, God hath prepared and accumulated all the ingredients of felicity and glory.

Now with all these figurative representations of the state of happiness in the World to come doth this

this in the Text of a Feast very well accord, setting out the same thing in like manner by the entertainment of the senses, wherein according to the notion of it, not only the greatest delicacies, and the greatest plenty of them are implied, but also order, and joy, and unanimity in those that partake of them, which together marvellously well represent that felicity we speak of.

Τὸ φαγεῖν
Σύμβολον
ἐστὶ τρυφῆς
ψυχικῆς,
τρίβεται
ἀγαθὴ
καὶ ἡδονή,
Phil. Jud.
de Alleg.

To speak fully and clearly about that Estate is beyond the ability of any mortal man: for besides that the Apostle hath told us, 1 Cor. 2. 9. *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for those that love him*; It is obvious to consider, that infinite goodness and wisdom may easily contrive such instances of happiness, as surpass our understanding, till we come to enjoy them; since he can neither raise up new objects to entertain those faculties we have, or create new powers in our Souls, which shall be able to discover fresh and more quick and admirable delights than any we are now capable of; especially when he sets himself to make demonstration of his magnificence, and of the miracles of his love: and therefore we may very well surcease our curiosity, and rest our selves contented, since we have both assurance of such a thing in general, and of the greatness and completeness thereof: notwithstanding, because some knowledge of particulars also, will marvellously quicken us in our race thither, and support us under the burdens we must undergo in the mean time; therefore I will by the guidance of the Scripture, lay down these Four particulars touching that Estate.

§. III. In the first place, it is that which the Holy Scripture insists upon as a principal ingredient of the happiness of the other World; that whereas death had made a separation of Soul and Body, and (whatever circumstances the former might be conceived to be in the mean time, yet) the latter lay under the power of the Grave, and was the spoil and triumph of the Prince of Darkness; now by the wonderful power of the Almighty, this is raised up again out of its own Ashes, or out of whatever more desperate Estate it might seem to be in, and united to the Soul its old inmate again, that so the whole man may be happy. This is a point of felicity, which as it is not naturally due to men, but depends upon a voluntary act of the divine goodness, so also it can no otherwise be proved but by divine Revelation. And those that were destitute of that light (whatever raised apprehensions they might have of future rewards, and the happiness of the other life) could never with all their Philosophy make any discovery of this: nay, it was so far out of the rode of their thoughts, that it is a well known story of *Synesius* (who for his Learning and Piety was made of a Philosopher a Christian Bishop) that he confessed his Philosophy represented this point as utterly incredible to him; upon which account, he desired to be excused that dignity in the Church; and for the generality of the greatest *Pagan Wits*, they laughed at and derided this Doctrine when it was preached by the Apostles. And indeed, the thing it self is so very wonderfull, that had we not the plain and infallible promise of him to whom nothing is impossible, and therewithall a satisfaction to our reason, that he that could bring all things out of nothing

thing at first, may well be supposed able to effect other things also above our apprehension; it would stagger Christian Faith it self to assent to it; therefore for the manner of doing it, we must leave that to him; but for the matter, it is (as I said) as certain as divine testimony can make it, and being believed is of unspeakable consolation.

For what can be more comfortable than to be asserted from the power of the Grave, and rescued from death and mortality, to have our Soul refitted with Organs, and all the bodily powers awakened again so as to lose nothing by our fall; when death shall like a faithfull depository, restore us our whole selves perfect and intire? Is not the Spring very pleasant after a sharp and severe Winter, wherein though the seeds of all things have been preserved, yet they have been benumbed and rendered inactive; wherein the Heavens frowned, the Sea wrinkled her face, and the Earth grew effete and barren; as if her youth was over: to see now God renewing the face of all things, rendring them their wonted vigour, and cloathing them with their former verdure; to observe the Sea smoothing her brow, the Fields smile, every thing gay and glorious, and Heaven and Earth singing by way of *Antiphony*, to each other in praise of their great Creator; and in a word, whole Nature triumphing as in a resurrection from the dead? But now to see man after Diseases had acted all their spite upon him, and death had deflowered his beauty and bound up all his powers, and the Grave had held him long in possession, wherein his Body had undergone a thousand changes, from flesh to Earth, from Earth to Grass, from Grass to the substance of this or that Beast, &c. and after all this to see him restored again fresh and glo-

rious, sprightly and vigorous *like a Giant refreshed with wine*, and this same Body to be united to its proper Spirit, by more firm and indissoluble ligaments, and be again usefull for all its offices and purposes; how happy must this meeting, how great must this joy be! and not much unlike that we had lately before us in the Parable, when the long sorrowfull and indulgent Father recovers his lost and deplored Son.

I do not doubt but that the Souls of men when they are separated from their Bodies, are able to understand and perform some of their most proper and spiritual functions; for I see no reason why the Soul should so much depend upon matter, as to be utterly inactive without it; especially when I consider, that whilst we are in the Body we govern it, prescribe to it, deny it, expose it to hardship, and sometimes act directly cross to the interest of it; and besides this, we find that there are some things which our mind takes notice of, which the bodily faculties could give no intelligence of, and other things which our mind apprehends at first, before the exercise of any faculty at all, as in first Principles, &c. All which (were it necessary to insist upon that point now) would afford sufficient arguments to convince the mistake of those that assert the sleep of the Soul during its state of Separation. Nay, I make no question but that the Souls of good men are in the actual perception and enjoyment of some measures of happiness before the Resurrection; for besides, that if it were not so, it would very much abate their joys here, and so be apt to take off the edge of their endeavours, but most certainly it would marvellously glue men to this life, and make them extremely unwilling to die; besides this I say, and all other arguments of that

that nature, the holy Scripture is so clear and express in several places touching this point, that a man may almost with as good confidence deny the World to come as disbelieve this.

Amongst the rest I will only offer these two passages to the Reader's consideration; (*viz.*) *Phil.* 1. 21, 22. and *2 Cor.* 5. 1, 4. In the first the Apostle speaks on this wise; *I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. q. d.* I cannot tell whether to desire to live longer or to die sooner, being prest with arguments on both sides; for if I consult my self and my own good, it is doubtless better for me to die, and to enter presently into happiness; but then if I consult your convenience, it were better I should live longer in the World, to be serviceable to your edification. Now (I think) it is evident, that if the Apostle could have supposed that he should have entered into a state of silence after death, and not presently been in the fruition of bliss; there could have been no strait in the case, nor any dispute but that it was better to live still in the World, and continue in the comforts of a good Conscience, and of doing good to others, rather than to fall into a state of insensibility and inactivity.

In the other place the same Apostle expresses himself thus. *For we know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, but eternal in the Heavens. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened, not that we would be unclothed but clothed upon, that mortality may be swallowed up of life. q. d.* We are well assured that from such time as these Bodies of ours are dissolved

ved by death, which were intended but as Tents or Tabernacles for our short and temporary residence, thence-forward we shall be in a more settled state of life and happiness. And that's the reason why we groan and desire to die, not meerly because we are weary of our station, and impatient of this present life, but because we have then hope to be forthwith in a far better condition, being put into an unalterable estate of life.

Notwithstanding the truth of all which, it would nevertheless be uncomfortable to good men, if they had not a prospect of the union of their Souls again with their Bodies; not only because few Men are so metaphysical as to have any clear and satisfying notion of this separate state; and the most of Men (having been always used to a Body) would be in fear of losing their Being, if they were not relieved with the expectation of being united to them again: But principally because It is certain, that however the Soul can exist, and perform some actions of life without the Organs of the Body, yet it being created in a middle rank between purely spiritual and meerly corporeal Beings, and being *apta nata*, fit and ordained to inform a Body, must needs have an inclination thereunto, and especially in regard most of its accustomed actions do require the help of the bodily powers; for though it may understand without them, love God, adhere to goodness, reflect upon it self, and feel the comforts of a good Conscience, upon a well-performed life, &c. yet it is not intelligible how it can see without Eyes, move locally, or apply it self to society without them.

Now forasmuch as God intends that the whole man should be happy, and compleatly comfortable in the other World, therefore he hath resolved with

with himself, and assured us that the Body shall be raised again, and therefore the Scripture lays so much stress upon the Resurrection, as if Men's happiness were adjourned to that great day.

To which this is also to be added, that the Bodies we then are encouraged to expect, will be, as the Apostle calls them, *Spiritual Bodies*; that is, raised and sublimed from this drossy feculency, freed from sickness, pain, weariness, hunger, heaviness, and all the other imperfections of gross matter, and so be fit to correspond with the vigour of the Soul, and the glories of that blessed state. In all which together I place the first instance of the happiness of the other World, and whoever well considers, will find it to be a very great and glorious one. But,

Secondly, Man shall not only be restored to himself, and to all his capacities, but in the World to come there shall be the most delightful objects and entertainments provided for, and presented to all his powers, so as to employ, fill, and ravish them. We intimated under the former Head that the powers of the Body should be raised and improved, the Body being made spiritual and fine, by which means also the intellectual powers will be much advanced, having then exterior Organs capable of more generous use and employment. But to have powers enlarged without objects whereupon to employ, and wherein to delight themselves, would be a torment instead of an happiness. For the very reason of pain and grief lies in nothing else, but either that some powers are destitute of their proper objects, or that the powers and objects are mismatched and unproportionate to each other. Who will go about to appease hunger with Musick, or content any one sense with the objects of another

or

or think to satisfy the desires of a Man with the repast of a Beast? We see, both extream little and excessively great and glorious objects are alike troublesome to the Eye, and as well excessive joy and grief break and disturb the mind; all discontent and uneasiness of Men's spirits with their condition is from hence, that some power of theirs is either not provided for, or less benignly dealt with than it desires. So that felicity or misery arise neither from the absolute nature of things, but from their relative consideration; nor from that meerly, unless those things that are relatively good and proper, be also proportioned to the capacity of the power that receives and feels them.

Now therefore as the wise and good Creator of all things never brought any Creature into being, which he had not fitted with a satisfaction in its kind, nor opened any power for which he had not provided proportionable enjoyments; because had he done otherwise he had been the Author of evil and misery, and could not have looked over his works and pronounced of them that *they were good*: So much less will he permit that in the other World, wherein he intends to make the fullest demonstration of his goodness, there should be any instance of unhappiness, by reason of defect or disproportion; or especially that such holy men as he there designs to reward for all their faithful adherence and service to him, should have enlarged powers and scanty satisfactions, but the one answerable to the other: agreeably to which it is, that that state is represented by a Feast, (as we have observed already) where care is always taken that there be nothing offensive to the Guests, and that none of the participants may go away without full measures of what is desirable to them; wherewith also accord those

those other expressions of Holy Scripture, which describe God as making preparations from the beginning of the World, 1 Cor. 2. 9. *Matth. 25.34.* as we have intimated before.

In conformity to this notion it must needs be, that in the Kingdom of Heaven, in the first place, the mind of Man will be adorned with a greater measure of knowledge and wisdom than is attainable in this life; partly as it is exercised about higher and more noble objects than those we converse withal here below, partly also as it will have a clearer apprehension, and quicker perception than it is capable of whilst it is clouded by the fumes of a gross Body. Hence it is that the Apostle tells us, 1 Cor. 13. 12. *Here we see through a glass darkly, but there we shall see clearly, as we are seen.* There we shall contemplate things in themselves, and in their causes, which here we have but a faint reflection of; there we shall understand all the admirable wisdom of divine providence, which is here a mystery to us: Whilst we were in this World we modestly and humbly believed that all things wrought for good, but then we shall clearly understand the manner thereof: here we have a narrow sphere, but there we move in a clear and free air, and have a vast and unbounded prospect before us, in which our minds may ravish themselves with admiration, and expatiate without bounds or limits. There all the secrets of nature, the mysteries of grace, the knots of Theology, and the very *arcana imperii* will be open to us, as being now *interioris admissionis* of the Privy Council of Heaven.

And this will be as much more pleasant than the entertainments of sense are to us now, as the pleasures of a Man are beyond those of a Beast; or the faculty of reason is above the powers of the Body.

Body: And although it be too observable, that in this World men are commonly more taken with the latter than with the former, it is not because this is greater than that, or comparable to it, but because the generality of men have drowned themselves in the Body, and so lost all relish of intellectual pleasures; therefore when the Body is refined, and reason hath recovered thereby its just pre-eminence, and become a true test and *criterion* of good and evil, there will an unspeakable pleasure flow in this way.

Nor will the delight of the will in the close embraces of true and indubitable goodness be less ravishing than that of the mind in the apprehension of truth, forasmuch as the former is as natural to, and as peculiarly the entertainment of the one, as the latter is of the other faculty, and must most certainly afford so much a greater pleasure, as the will, (which hath a kind of infinity in itself,) must consequently be able to take in more largely of the pleasure of its object. And now that the man is delivered from the juggling and sophistry of *Satan*, and the false light of sense and carnal interest, so that he apprehends true good in its native beauty, it cannot be but he must be more taken with it, than ever he was heretofore with the empty and gilded Pageantry of corporeal delights; for it cannot be doubted but God hath taken care to reconcile every man's duty with his happiness, and made that best for man which he doth most peculiarly require of him; and every man will find it so when once temptation being removed, he singly and sincerely applies himself to the experiment.

And then for Conscience, or the comfortable reflection upon what hath been done well and virtuously.

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tuously. I need say the less of that, in regard every man in this life hath experience of the happy effects of it. But alas, in this World oftentimes melancholy of Body so much abates the comforts of it, and either dark thoughts of God, or the just sense of our own demerits by many miscarriages in time past, do so much either disturb its reasonings, or weaken its conclusions, that few men know rightly the force of it, and fewer live under the constant consolations thereof. But when men come to Heaven, and see God a God of love and goodness; find their sincerity accepted, and their sins done away; have no cloud of ignorance, nor melancholick panick fear upon them, then they recount with triumph all the difficulties they have conquered, the temptations they have resisted, the afflictions they have sustained, the self-denial they have used, the vertuous choice they have made, the manly prosecution they have performed, the brave examples they have left behind them, and the many evil ones they despised and escaped; in short, the good they have done, and the evil they have eschewed; and by all together, the demonstration they have given of sincere love and loyalty to God; which affords them a *continual feast within themselves, and they then rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*

And then in the last place, since (as we have shewed) the Body it self shall be raised again and glorified; the meaning is not surely, that it shall only become an accession to the felicity of the Soul, or be happy by reflection only; but doubtless all such bodily powers as are fit to be restored in this glorified state of a spiritual Body, shall be accommodated with their proper and peculiar entertainments: that so as that hath been denied and mortified in
subser-

subserviency to the interest of the Soul in its former state; it may now have its amends here. And whereas it is certain some of the more gross powers of the Body shall be laid aside in this renovation of things, because our Saviour hath told us, that *in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the Angels of God*: Matt. 22. 30. and the Apostle S. Paul expresses himself thus, *1 Cor. 6. 13. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them*: It seems therefore not improbable, that as some of those offices shall cease, so others more generous and excellent, shall then be discovered in their stead. And for all those that are restored with the Body, they shall not be in vain, but have their use, their objects, and their delights. The Eyes shall probably please themselves with delightful prospects, the Ears be entertained with Harmonies; there shall be a kindly and delicious motion of the Spirits, the whole Fabrick shall shine with light and beauty, and shall have a wonderful agility and vigorous motion, so as to be able to mount the Heavens, as we know the Body of our Saviour did after his Resurrection. All this, and whatsoever else is good, or desirable, or glorious, or possible, shall be the portion of good men in the other World.

To which add, that as that happiness shall be of the whole man, and of all his powers and capacities, and with the highest gratifications; so that it may be meer sincere and perfect happiness indeed, there shall be no alloy or mixture of any thing that may give the least trouble or disturbance; there shall be all the instances of joy, all the ingredients of felicity, and nothing else to the contrary. No sad circumstance to imbitter his delights, nothing
to

to divert him, or call him off from his enjoyments, no weariness to interrupt his prosecutions, nor satiety to make the fruition loathsome and tedious; no fear or solicitude to abate his delight, no temptation to disturb or molest him, no danger of excesses to check and restrain him. Here the former Prodigal may now swim in the highest and most generous pleasures without riot or intemperance; without danger of exhausting either himself or them: in a word, here there is no fatal interchanges and vicissitudes of good and evil, bitter and sweet, as is usual in this World, but simple, unmixt, constant joy and happiness.

It was a rare and unparallel'd happiness of *Quintus Metellus*, of whom it is said, that he had such a benign gale of prosperity constantly attended him, that in all the tedious and perillous Voyage of a very long life, he never met with storm nor calm, rock nor shelf, but arrived at his Port in Peace, full of days, and laden with blessings. For (saith the Historian) he lived in the greatest honour and affluence, having had the glory of being Consul (the highest Magistracy) of being General of a Roman Army, (the highest trust) and of a triumph, (the greatest honour and felicity.) He lived to see his three Sons all arrive at the highest dignities and preferments that magnificent State of Rome could yield them; his three Daughters all married to the best Families: and by all these he had a numerous and hopeful Progeny of Grandchildren descending from himself, and trained up under his Eye. In all his Life there was no other news in his Family but of Weddings, Births, Successes, Jollities and Triumphs; no such thing as a Funeral, Mourning, or any disaster all his Days: and all this crowned with an *εὐδαιμονία*, a

Valerius
Maximus;
lib. 7. cap. 11.

11. cap. 11.

A a

gentle

gentle and easy death at last in the presence and embraces of all his dearest Friends, Children, and Family.

But this (as I said) was a rare and extraordinary Case, not to be matched again in all History; the common method of Providence in this World is to mingle sweet with bitter, grief with joy; and so light and darkness, day and night, prosperity and adversity intercept and succeed each other; he that is now miserable may expect to be one day happy, and he that is happy now, must expect his turn of misery. It was therefore worthily esteemed a brave and noble carriage of *Paulus Aemilius*, when he had conquered and taken captive the potent Prince *Perses*, after he had gently treated and comforted the unfortunate Prince, he turns himself to admonish the un-experienced young Men of his Train and Family. *Exemplum insignis cernitis (saith he) mutationis rerum humanarum, vobis hac praeipue dico Juvenes, ideo in secundis rebus nihil in quinquam superbe ac violenter consulere, nec praesenti credere fortuna, cum quid vesper ferat incertum sit, &c.* You see here before you (saith he) a remarkable example of the mutability of human affairs, a Prince that was lately a terror to the Roman name now in chains, and at our mercy; learn hereby you young men, that you neither suffer yourselves to be transported with pride, nor trust too much to fortune, since you see by this spectacle what changes a little time may produce. But most memorable of all, and most accommodate to my purpose, is that carriage of the same *Paulus*, when in the midst of all his glories and successes, the news was brought him that his two Sons were dead, he recollected himself, and addresses himself to the people of

Ib. cap 41. Rome in this sort: Mibi quoq; ipsi nimia jam for-

tuna

luna mea, eaq; suspecta esse capis, & postquam omnia secundo cursu fluxissent, neq; erat quod ultra precarer, illud optavi ut cum ex summo retrò volvi fortuna consuescit, mutationem ejus domus mea potius quam respublica sentiret, &c. I was aware (saith he) that my fortune was too great to hold on at that rate, and since I could not but expect an ebb to succeed such a tide, I am glad it hath pleased God that the change hath happened in my private family rather than in the publick affairs.

This great man well understood the course of this World, in which nothing is so certain as uncertainty it self, nothing so sad but hath some qualifications or abatements; nothing so perfectly happy, but it hath some grievous consequents or appendages. But in those happy Regions we speak of, a constant gale breaths always from the same point; a man is evenly carried along his course, without interruptions and turnings; I say, in the World to come only, there is pure and unmixed joy, and there it is in the truest and fullest measures.

Now the result of all these things together must make it a most glorious and comfortable estate; when a man shall arrive at the summ of all his wishes, when he shall not be put to contentment but receive satisfaction; not shrink himself, and contract his mind to his condition, but his condition be fitted to his mind; when there shall not be that thing which is possible, and can minister any delight, but shall be poured out upon him, and that in such full measure, as to replenish and overflow all his powers and capacities; and where his powers shall be all enlarged and refined to that very end, that he may receive in more of happiness, and that of the noblest purest kind without

mixture or alloy. " O happy and glorious state
 " of things! O happy day when these things shall
 " come to pass! and most happy they that shall
 " be thought worthy of it! Stay my Soul, and
 " wonder at thy Father's bounty and goodness;
 " ravish thy self with admiration of these glori-
 " ous preparations for thy entertainment. Look
 " up hither, and comfort thy self under all the
 " uncertainties, disappointments, adversities, con-
 " flicts of this life, turn thy Eyes this way, and
 " loath the Husks of sinfull pleasure; despise the
 " unsincere, the gilded hypocritical treatments of
 " the lower World, trample upon all the glories
 " of it, and reach after this and hasten hither.

3. But this is not all yet, the joys of Heaven
 are as lasting as they are great and full. When
 God hath recovered his lost Son (as aforesaid) he
 shall never be lost again, he shall never be miserable
 more, he now gives him an inheritance by an in-
 defecible title ; *A Crown immortal that fadeth not*
away, a Kingdom that cannot be shaken. A house
not made with hands, but eternal in the Heavens :
 Stronger than the foundations of the Earth, or the
 Poles of Heaven; for those shall be dissolved, and
 these shall melt away with fervent heat; *But thy*
throne, O God, endureth for ever and ever.

Let there be never so many and great ingredi-
 ents of felicity otherwise, if this be wanting of the
 duration of it, it answers not the desires of a man,
 and is very short and defective. For whenever it
 shall expire, it will be as if it never had been; nay,
 if any sense of things remain afterwards, it is a
 great aggravation of unhappiness *fuisse felicem*, that
 a man hath out-lived his own comforts, and the
 comparing his present destitution with his former
 enjoyments, is really a torment to him. There-
 fore

fore it is observed to be the humour of some of the wisest Nations, to bestow as little cost as they possibly can upon feasting, and the bodily entertainments of eating and drinking, who yet are very sumptuous and magnificent in buildings, and such other things as are durable, because they consider those former *perish in the using*. And this is the very argument upon which the Holy Scripture flurs all the glories of this World, that *το σκηνωσις*, the Scene changes; all is but acting a part for a while, and shortly the lights are put out, the Curtain drawn, and *sic transit gloria mundi*; in whatever gallantry a man appeared upon the Stage, he must retire and be undrest, and be what he was before; upon which account he must be a very vain and silly man, who so little forethinks what will shortly befall him, as to bear himself high upon his present ornaments.

1 Cor. 7. 31.

But it was without doubt a cutting saying to the Glutton in the Gospel; *Son, remember thou hast had thy good things, and Lazarus evil things; now therefore he is comforted, and thou art tormented*. For although (as we noted before) it be the common fate of this World that good and evil take their turns, yet most certainly the relish and remembrance of good things past makes the succession of evil most pungent and intolerable. Nay, which is more, the very fears and expectation of this vicissitude makes the sense of the greatest present pleasures flat and insignificant.

It would questionless be a great relief to the Souls in Hell, and a remission of their torments, if they could conceive any hopes of emerging at last out of that condition; and it would be a great abatement of the joys of Heaven, if any suspicion should enter there, that possibly that fel-

licity might one time or other expire. But this is the very Hell of Hell, that there is not the least cranny through which to spy light beyond those dark Regions; no hopes, but they that come thither are for ever abandoned by God, and made the triumphs of his vengeance. And it is the glory of celestial glory, the crown of the Heavenly Kingdom that it is eternal, that the river of life is inexhaustible, that the glorious enjoyments of that blessed state never fail, and that men shall ever live to enjoy them.

O Eternal, eternal! that word speaks Seas of comfort and aboundless glory; it fills us with wonder and astonishment, it is that which we cannot comprehend, and therefore fit to be the supreme happiness. Eternal life is all the World, and more than ten thousand Worlds in one word. It is higher than the Heavens, greater than the Universe, it is all things. It is the flower of Joy, the quintessence of Comfort, the pinnacle of Glory, the crown of Blessedness, the very soul and spirit of Heaven. It is all miracle, all ecstasie, all that we can wish, all that we can receive, all that God can give; nay, all that he himself can enjoy.

But the wonder rises higher yet, if we consider who it is that is made the subject of this blessed Eternity. If it had been some glorious Angelical Being, who was by nature removed from all matter, out of the reach of bodily contagion or infirmity; a pure bright shining intellect: or if it had been man that had never fallen from Paradise, that had contracted no sickness and infirmity, no disorder of passions, nor violence of humours, nor other preface of mortality; or especially, if it had been a man that never had voluntarily sinned against his Maker, but such an one as by prudent management
and

and subjugation of his Body under all the difficulties he is thereby exposed to, had merited some extraordinary favour at God's hand; if, I say, any of these had been the case, eternal life had been less admirable.

But that man cloathed with a Body, clogged with flesh, that fallen and degenerate man, nay, sickly, infirm man, a meer bundle of a thousand Diseases, the triumph of Death, and the Prisoner of the Grave, that he should become the subject of Eternity, and be placed in a condition out of the reach of fate, beyond the sphere of chance and contingency, above mortality, where no time shall wear him away, no violence shall touch him, no strife of principles shall gradually work his destruction.

When the Everlasting Springs are dried up, that he should have life in himself; when the Mountains shall be removed, the Earth abolished, and the Heavens pass away as a smoak, that he should survive all this, and be fresh and vigorous to a thousand Ages, and feel a perpetual motion, a constant circulation of the principles of life and joy in himself; this is the wonder of all wonders, and here we may cry out *Admiration*, *O the height, and depth, and breadth of the power and goodness of God.*

Notwithstanding all these multitudes of wonders, this shall be done; for besides that the Divine Majesty made the Soul of an immortal nature from the beginning, that it cannot perish but by an act of his Omnipotency, he will be so far from destroying it violently, that he will everlastingly irradiate it by his own vital Spirit, and thereby perpetually improve that energy he first gave it; and then for the Body, that shall be sublimed to such a purity and perfection, that it shall admit of no corruptive fermentation, nothing shall weaken, weary

or disorder it, but it shall be plainly indissoluble as the Soul it self. This is the third step of Heaven's glory; but there is a fourth yet behind which must not be forgotten. And that is

4. The consideration of the incomparably sweet and blessed society there to be enjoyed. When God had first made man, and placed him in the terrestrial Paradise, where to the perfection of his nature he had furnished him also with all things of necessary use, or delightfull entertainment, he considered yet *that it was not good for man to be alone*, and therefore provided a Companion for him; for in the midst of all affluence of other things, solitude is most uncomfortable to humane nature, in so much that it is not to be doubted, but that any man in his right wits, would rather chuse very mean and hard circumstances in society, than the most plentiful and most commodious, with seclusion from the conversation of men like himself. For society not only relieves men's impotency, and secures them against danger, but fortifies the spirits, and raises the parts of men, as we see by daily experience; and above all, it eases the burdens, and multiplies the joys of humane life: and touching this last, as the Earth is not so much warmed and enriched by the direct, as by the reflected beams of the Sun; so we find by experience that there is no happy accident or success equally refreshes us in its direct contingency, as when we perceive it in the rebound or rally, and find other men (especially our Friends) take notice of it, and reflect it upon us: And for this reason it is, that though the World be full enough of men, yet men (not content with that common alliance) enter besides into more strict confederations, which we call Friendships, (which are therefore not unjustly called

led by some body *sal societatis, infirmitatis praesidium et vitae humanae portus;*) as if life was not only an unsafe but an insipid and flat thing without Friendship.

And this is not only so amongst men, but something of it is discoverable even amongst those higher and more noble Beings the Angels themselves, touching whom though some have been too fantastical and *boldly intruded into things they understand not,* peremptorily defining their distinct Orders and Colledges, yet it's plain enough that God placed not them in solitude, but made several Orders and Societies of them, and accordingly they find delight in one another, not only in the mutual assistance they give each other in the discharge of their Ministeries here below, but in joyning together in blessed Quires above, to admire and praise their ever glorious Creator. And perhaps it is not impertinent to add this also, that even the Divine Majesty it self, who by reason of his infinite perfections is *seipso contentus,* and can have no need of any thing without or besides himself; yet when we say (and that truly) of him, that he made all things for himself; and his own glory, the meaning is, that he takes delight in the reflection of his own Image, and feels his own perfections reverberated upon him from his Creatures.

But there is no necessity we should go so far, since all I am concerned in at present is sufficiently manifest; namely, that the happiness of men in the Kingdom of Heaven could not be complete and full without the advantage of that blessed society which there they shall enjoy, and that added to the forementioned ingredients, raises it to the highest pitch of felicity that we can apprehend or imagine.

For

For in the first place, there we shall enjoy the glorious presence of the Divine Majesty, without consternation or affrightment; whilst Men are in this World, it is not only impossible for weak Eyes to behold so bright a glory, but every approach of him strikes them with terrour. When God had appeared to *Jacob* in a Vision only, it filled him with great apprehensions of so august a Majesty, and he breaks out, *Gen. 28. 17. How dreadful is this place, &c.* And the Prophet *Isaiah*, when he saw a stately scene of the Divine Glory, cries out, *Woe is me, I am undone, for mine eyes have seen the King the Lord of Hosts: Isa. 6. 5.* For besides that the very glory of such displays of the Divinity, were wont to be very wonderful and surprizing, the consideration also of what Men had deserved at God's hands, and the reflection upon their own miscarriages, made all such appearances very formidable and suspicious to them. But now in Heaven we shall *see him and live*; he will not oppress us with his Majesty, nor confound us with his Glory; there shall be no guilt to affright us, nor object to amaze us; he will either fortify and sharpen our sight, or submit himself to our capacity, and shine out in all sweetness, delight and complacency towards us.

Now this must needs afford unspeakable felicity, for in enjoying him we enjoy all things; forasmuch as all that is any where good and delectable, did flow from him, and is to be found in him, as in its source and original. All that can careen our powers, that can ravish our hearts, all that is good, all that is lovely and desirable, are here in their greatest perfection, and compendiously to be enjoyed. So the Psalmist, *Psal. 16. 11. In thy presence*

sence there is fulness of joy, and at thy right there are pleasures for evermore.

Again, we shall there also enjoy the society of the blessed *Jesus*, we shall see him *as he is, and behold his glory*; and be with him for ever. What a ravishment was it to the Disciples, and what an ecstasy did it put them into, when he appeared again to them after his Resurrection? he had promised them he would do so, and they had reason to believe him; having seen the miracles he had wrought already, and the wonderful attestations to his divine power; notwithstanding, when they saw with what malice the *Jews* persecuted him, and with what success, that they stigmatized his reputation, insulted over his person, derided his doctrine, and put him to death, which he had now for some time lien under the power of; their hearts mis-gave them, and they began now to mistrust they should never see him again, *who they had hoped should have redeemed Israel*. However, they resolve to see what is become of him, and between hopes and fears they come to his Sepulchre on the third day, but with more of the latter than the former, as appears by the spices they brought with them to imbalm him; as if they resolved his memorial should be precious with them though they never saw him more. Thither being come they find the Watch dismayed and fled, the Sepulchre open, the Grave-Cloaths laid in order, all which somewhat revived them; and besides, they see an Angel standing at the door, telling them that he was indeed risen from the dead; this more encourages them: but when himself appears to them as they were going pensive into *Galilee*, and convinces them

that

that it was indeed he, by entertaining them with the same discourses he used to have with them, by eating with them, and by shewing to *Thomas* especially his Hands and his Feet, and all the Characters of the same person :

Then what joy were they in ! Lord how were they transported ! how do they wonder at their own stupidity and incredulity hitherto, and admire their own felicity now ! But when at the last day, after many hundred years interruption of his bodily appearance, say, when those good Men that *have not seen, but have believed*, that have lived to him, denied themselves, been persecuted, have died for him, shall see him in glory, shall behold that image of perfect goodness and loveliness, shall enjoy him that died for them, that purchased them by his blood, that opened Heaven to them, shall hear him say, *Come ye blessed of my Father, receive a Kingdom prepared for you, &c.* " You who have
 " imitated me in holiness, and followed me in my
 " sufferings ; you who have not been discouraged
 " by the meanness of my first appearance, nor the
 " long expectation of my second coming ; whose
 " love and resolution for me was not baffled by the
 " contempt of the World, debauched by the ex-
 " amples of men, nor abated by the pretended diffi-
 " culty of my institutions ; you shall now see my glo-
 " ry, be like me, rejoyce with me, live with me, and
 " never be separated from me more. It is in vain
 for me to go about to express the transcendency of
 this joy, which no tongue can utter, nor any Pen
 can describe ; we can think a great deal more than
 we can speak, but we shall then feel what we cannot
 now conceive ; when every face shall shine with
 cheerfulness, every eye sparkle with joy, every heart
 overflow

verflow with gladness, and every mouth be filled with Allelujah, and the whole Quire sing together the new song, the song of *Moses*, and of the Lamb.

But this is not all yet, for in Heaven holy men shall not only enjoy the presence of their Lord, but the comfortable society of all his train, the glorious Host of Angels; these as they have condescended to minister to Men in this World, and diligently to imploy themselves for the protection of good men, and for the recovering of evil men to God, and for the raising them from the dead, and presenting them before God in Heaven; so having now successfully finished all that ministry, shall now welcome them to glory; rejoyce with them, and entertain them in friendly and familiar conversation: those great, and wise, and holy Spirits shall recount to them all the wonders of divine providence past, which they have been imployed in, discover to them all the secrets of the other World, and as Praecentors, go before and guide them in all the joys and triumphs of that blessed Kingdom.

And lastly, holy men shall rejoyce in the happy society of one another. Some men call the betaking themselves to a Cloister or Monastery, by the name of forsaking the World, as if that was the greatest instance of self-denial and mortification; whereas in truth if things be well considered (especially if that state of retirement be ordered as it should, and pretends to be,) it is so far from a severity to ones self, that it is the most effectually to consult a Man's ease and comfort; it is to forsake the hurry, the trouble, vexation and care of the World, and to enjoy freely and without interruption the best thing this World hath, which is the company of persons just like a man's self, without

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the annoyance of different humours, qualities and interests; and doubtless were such a thing to be hoped for in this World (which that sort of men pretend) it were the most lovely and desirable thing that can be here, that so many good and wise men who destine themselves only to the study of vertue and knowledge, who are all of a mind; all in a like condition; who have no cross or interfering interests amongst them, should enjoy one another constantly, under the same Roof, relieve one anothers necessities, improve one anothers parts, and comfort each others minds. Such a condition I say, were it any where to be found on this side Heaven, would tempt men to say with *S. Peter, Master, it is good for us to be here, &c.* But alas, whatever men talk or fantasie, there is no select Company, but there is some weakness and folly amongst them; there is no such recess, but emulation and passion finds entrance; no Wilderness without a Devil and temptation, nor any life whatsoever in this World; that is wholly free from care and vexation. Because there is sickliness and passion, divers humours of Body, and different constitutions of Mind; the understandings of men are of several statures, their interest thwart one another; there will be peevishness and misunderstanding, whisperings and jealousie, passion and parties amongst men while they are here.

*Operatur
rum diem
cum ad il-*

lud divinum animorum concilium curamque proficiscar, & cum ex hac turba & colluvione discedam, &c. Cicer. de Senectute.

But in the Kingdom of Heaven there meet the spirits only of just men made perfect, holy men freed from misunderstanding, passion or imperfection; no annoyance either by the vicinage of the wicked, or the infirmities of the sincerely vertuous.

All

All are of one mind, of one lip, one heart, no saying I am of *Paul*, I of *Cephas*, or I of *Christ*, for *Christ* is all, and in them all.

And what a felicity this is like to be we may partly guess by the distractions of the Church here below, for want of it, which are such as that it's hard to say whether Religion suffer more, or by its united Enemies, or by its divided Friends; and whether the uncharitableness of Christians be not as lamentable, as the persecutions of *Pagans*. But there disputes shall cease, all heats be abated, all Controversies umpired, and all having one end and interest, the only emulation shall be who shall embrace the other with the more ardent love, and more adore and magnify the Divine Majesty.

There shall be the glorious *Panegyris*, the Assembly and Church of the first-born, a Collection of all the good men that ever were from the foundation of the World; and men shall come from the *East and the West, and from the North and from the South, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the Kingdom of God*. Here shall be no private spirit, no narrow hide-bound mind that can love only their own Opinion, or Party, or Kindred, or Benefactors; but a generous Love, an universal good-will: those shall imbrace that never saw each other before, because the same image of God and goodness runs through the whole Society. "Who would not make one of this Assembly? who would not get into this Ark out of a troublesome, froward, contentious World, and there live in Love, in Joy, in Peace to all Eternity?"

These

These are some Clusters of the Land of Canaan, this is a rude and imperfect draught of the New Jerusalem; this (I say, is (according as I am able to set it forth) the entertainment which God gives his Children when they come home to him. And so much for the third and last part of the Parable.

 CHAP. VI.

THE

Father's Apology,

OR, A

VINDICATION

OF THE

Divine Goodness

In the aforesaid Dispensation.

WE have now gone through all the three Parts of the Parable which we observed at our entrance upon it; and in the first of them under the type of a loose and undutifull Son, we have seen the extravagant folly and madness of a course of sin. In the Second, under the figure of the same Son, recovering his right mind, and returning to himself, and to his Father, we have had set before us a lively draught of true repentance. And in the last, by

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the compassions and kindness of an earthly Parent, in receiving, blessing, and rejoycing in such a Son upon his return, we have had some resemblance of the unspeakable mercies of God in pardoning, sanctifying, and saving penitent sinners. And now we are come to the Epilogue or Conclusion of the whole, which in the letter contains the Apology which the Father makes for this his indulgent proceedings with his Son, and in the mystery and scope of it, a vindication of God's justice, wisdom and goodness, in treating great sinners, upon their repentance with all those demonstrations of favour and bounty which we have lately discoursed of.

For (as we have noted in the entrance upon this Parable) the Scribes and Pharisees took great offence, both at the kind and obliging Conversation which our Saviour used towards Publicans and Sinners, and at the incouragement he gave them (in his doctrine) to hope for pardon and reception with God upon their repentance; the latter of these was the immediate discharge of that gracious Embassy our Saviour came into the World upon; (*viz.*) to amend it, and to make reconciliation between God and Man, and the former was only a prudent Oeconomy of his to oblige their attention and to gain opportunities of treating with Men in order to their reformation.

But those ill-natured and self-weening persons who would ingross all God's favours to themselves and their own character, interpret this condescension of our Saviour to bad men, to be in derogation to those that were good, and traduce the comfortableness of his Gospel as an incouragement to looseness. "For why (say they) should

" God

“ God the King of glory be thought to debase
 “ himſelf ſo far as to ſend Embaſſadors to Re-
 “ bels? hath he more kindneſs for them than for
 “ his moſt dutifull Subjects? hath he (like *Da-*
 “ *vid*) ſuch ſoft indulgence towards a comely
 “ but diſobedient *Absolom*, that he prefers his
 “ ſafety before the whole Hoſt of his moſt loyal
 “ Servants? can it be that the Almighty ſhould
 “ (like ſome good-natured perſons) be ſo ready
 “ to forgive their Enemies, that they forget their
 “ Friends and themſelves too? what is there no
 “ difference between the good and the bad? no
 “ diſtinction? is Heaven prepared for the one as
 “ well as for the other? is he likely to be a Mes-
 “ ſenger ſent from God, and to reform the
 “ World, that is found in Converſation, and
 “ maintaining Friendſhip with thoſe that are the
 “ ſcandal of it? or why doth he not preach Hell
 “ and Damnation to ſuch, rather than hopes and
 “ comfort? why doth he not proclaim the glori-
 “ ous privileges of good and holy Men, rather
 “ than pardon to the bad and vicious? at leaſt,
 “ why doth he not reprove debauchery and pro-
 “ phaneneſs, rather than expoſe Hypocriſy, and
 “ be always girding at the ſanctified party? We
 “ Scribes and Pharifees faſt and pray, and oblige
 “ our ſelves to a thouſand nice and difficult ob-
 “ ſervances: we wear God's livery, and call our
 “ ſelves by his name; inſomuch that all the
 “ World takes us for his Servants: But theſe
 “ Publicans and Sinners are meer Sons of *Belial*,
 “ have acknowledged no Lord, ſubmitted to no
 “ Yoke, but given themſelves up to their own
 “ will and pleaſure. And we have always main-
 “ tained the ſame tenour, kept up our profeſſion,

“ and drawn the Eyes of all Men upon us for
 “ our zeal and accuracy in our Religion; but
 “ these Men with whom this pretended *Messiah*
 “ is so familiar, and whom he so much incon-
 “ rages, if they are good, it is very lately come
 “ upon them, and the scars of their former life
 “ must needs reflect as much scandal upon his in-
 “ stitution, as their present Discipleship can do
 “ honour to his skill in their cure and reformati-
 “ on. What reason can there be that he should
 “ be so fond of them, and so neglectfull of us
 “ how can they have equal title to, or the same
 “ shares in the other World with our selves
 “ such equality is the greatest inequality; such a-
 “ rithmetical justice, would be the greatest inje-
 “ stice, and argue God guilty of accepting persons,
 “ which he declares against.

This is a true Copy of the thoughts of these
 self-conceited *Jews* that murmured against our Sa-
 viour's Doctrine and Management, and this is the
 best that can be made of their pretences for so
 doing; To convince them of the weakness and
 absurdity whereof our Saviour turns the Tables,
 and (as we have seen) having introduced a foolish,
 disobedient, and vicious man, after a long course
 of wildness and extravagancy, coming at last to
 himself, and then returning to his Father, and
 his Duty, pardoned, and joyfully received by
 him.

This (saith our Saviour) is the image or like-
 ness of the Case we dispute about. But then
 suppose (saith he) this Father having another
 Son, who had not as the former, ever run into
 rebellion against him, and he should now expo-
 stulate with his Father after this manner: *De*
these

these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment : And yet thou never gavest me a Kid, that I might make merry with my friends : But as soon as this thy Son was come, which had devoured thy living with Herlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted Calf. q. d.

“ Sir,
 “ I call your self to witness the sincerity and constancy of my duty towards you; did I ever dispute your authority, boggle at your commands, or express a weariness of your service? I never to this day rebelled against you, as this your younger Son hath done; who after he had mis-spent your substance by riot and debauches, made himself a shame to your name and family; and now reduced to extremity (having no other way to betake himself to) is returned to you, and received by you with such demonstrations of unusual joy and favour. Was I ever he, that by any wilfull miscarriage deserved your just displeasure? or were you ever so kind a Father to me, as to express your resentment of my duty and diligence, by any such instance as you have made to him after an extraordinary manner? Give me leave therefore to say,
 “ I cannot but wonder at the different measures you make use of towards him and me; if this indeed be your act, and not rather the unlicensed profusion of your Steward and Servants, for joy that they have now found a Son of yours like themselves, to countenance and encourage their excesses! Sure it is not all one with you whether your Children be good or bad, obedient or disobedient. I cannot suspect it should be with you as with common persons, who remember the last and freshest kindnesses,

Bb 3

“ but

“ but forget old and faithfull services ; or who
 “ value their hopes above their experiences ; nor
 “ can I think it becomes me to accuse you of
 “ fondness and partiality, as the present face of
 “ things would give some colour for. It is true,
 “ your younger Son is returned, but he went a-
 “ way first ; he is found, but I was never lost. In
 “ short, the present scene of jollity is of dange-
 “ rous example, apt to incourage looseness, and
 “ discourage obedience; therefore I hope it hath
 “ not your allowance ; or however, I cannot bear
 “ the reflection it makes upon my self, and there-
 “ fore will bear no part in it.

And now (saith our Saviour) look what an-
 swer you would think the Father would make in
 this case to the discontents of his elder Son :
 and the same will both justifie God, and vindic-
 cate me in the point in hand. And I doubt not
 but you imagine the Father would reply thus,
*Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is
 thine ; but it was meet that we should make merry
 and be glad ; for this thy Brother was dead, and is
 alive again ; was lost, and is found.* And this an-
 swer will as well justifie God in his proceedings
 with the Sons of men against the murmurings of
 Scribes and Pharisees, as it will do an Earthly
 Parent in his dealings with his Children : for
 whether we consider the literal, or the more re-
 condite sense of the words, we shall easily observe
 these three things to be contained in them.

1. *An assertion of prerogative, in that in both
 the cases supposed, as well the Heavenly Father as the
 Earthly do but dispose of their own.*

2. *A declaration of justice in those words, All that I have is thine.*

3. *A demonstration of wisdom, It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, &c. But these deserve to be more fully explained.*

First then in the cases forementioned, both the Earthly Parent, and especially God Almighty, have just right to dispose as they please. *Μὴ τί ἐκ ἀνιάζον, καὶ οὐκ ἀνιάζον μὴ ἐκ ἀνιάζον, καὶ οὐκ ἀνιάζον. οὐχὶ ἐκ ἀνιάζον ἀνιάζον ἐκ ἀνιάζον. καὶ οὐκ ἀνιάζον, &c.* (saith S. Chrysostom) I took nothing from thee (my elder Son) to give to my younger; I did not strip one to adorn another; all was my own grace and favour. There is a vast difference betwixt matters of strict justice, and matters of bounty; or between merit and free gift. If an Earthly Parent should deprive one Son of his right out of fondness or indulgence to the other, or should give the first less than he deserves, that he might give the second more, this were apparent injustice; but so long as the one hath no wrong done him, though the other have more than is necessarily due to him, there is no cause of complaint. And so should God do as the people of Israel charged him, *Ezek. 18.* that is, should he make one man a sufferer for another's sin, and order it that *Whereas the Fathers have eaten sour grapes, the Children's teeth should be set on edge*; This he himself acknowledges would represent his ways unequal; or if he should (as some have had the confidence to assert) by an horrible decree, prejudice a great part of mankind to eternal torments before they had done good or evil, or without respect to their carriage in

times to come, meerly for the demonstration of his Sovereignty, or the inhancing of his favour to others, whom he alike absolutely decrees to save; this would notoriously blemish his justice: and therefore he neither can nor will ever do any such thing. But now to resolve to punish one less than another, when both have deserved ill alike; or to give more and greater favours to one than to another, when both have deserved equally well, is very agreeable to the Divine Majesty, and that which we see instances of in common experience. For who shall say the rest of the *Galileans* were not as bad as those *Eighteen upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell, or those other whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices?* Or who will be so uncharitable as to affirm, that every man whom we observe to be rich and prosperous in this World, is a better and more vertuous man, than he whose fortune is lower and less comfortable? In neither of these cases any man is wronged, only some are favoured; and in the first of these two cases God remits of his own right to punish, and in the latter he exercises his bounty and liberality. So our Saviour hath determined the case in the Gospel, when those that came early into the Vineyard expostulated, when they observed that those which came in at the last hour fared as well as they, *Matt. 20. 12. Is thine eye evil, because mine is good? shall I not do what I will with mine own? &c.* Is it any wrong to you that another speeds better than he deserves? or must God not only give an account of his justice, but of his bounty too? And this will be as apparent if we suppose two persons to have deserved unequally, (that is to say) when one hath indeed deserved better in the same kind

kind than another, but neither of them have been in any sort proportionable to the reward which is bestowed, for then it is plain that there can be no wrong because there is no merit properly so called.

And this is the very case in hand, suppose a very holy man that hath constantly persevered in a course of the strictest vertue, if now another man that becomes vertuous at last be admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven as well as he, there can be no ground of murmuring because Heaven is no man's due, no man deserves it but in the words of our Saviour, S. Luk. 17. 10. *When we have done all that we can, we must say, We are unprofitable servants, and have only done what was our duty to do.* In short, the great blessings of the Gospel (which we not long since spoke of) namely, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the Resurrection of the Body, and the Glories of the Kingdom of Heaven, are all the effects of meer and unspeakable Grace, to which no man hath any Right antecedent to God's promise; and therefore since no man could have complained of God if he had not propounded them to us, no more than the posterity of *Esaú* could challenge God that he promised not the Land of *Canaan* to them, as well as to the Offspring of *Jacob*; consequently least of all can any man reasonably think himself injured if God by Prerogative admit other men besides himself into the participation thereof. Especially if we consider

2. In the second place, that one man's enjoyment of those glories is no abatement of another man's happiness that partakes of them. For thus saith the Father,

Father, Son, all that I have is thine. q. d. "I am still able to reward thee, though I have been thus liberal to thy Brother; I will be just to thee though I have been thus kind to him. *Καὶ γὰρ πῶς διὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν, καὶ κῆνον ἰλεῶ διὰ τῆς καλλίστης ἐπιστροφῆς; καὶ οἱ πόθῳ διὰ τῆς ζωῆς, καὶ κῆνον διὰ τῆς μεταβολῆς, &c.* I esteem thee for thy virtuous course, and have mercy on him for his wise recourse or return: I love thee for thy constant holy life, and him for his happy conclusion. Thou shalt have never the less than I have promised, though he have more than he could expect.

S. Chryl.
ubi prius.

Now although it be somewhat difficult to make this literally true in the narrow condition of humane affairs; for first it is very common for Parents to take off that love from one Child which they bestow immoderately upon another; and again, if their affections were infinite, yet their fortunes are not; and a great liberality to one must make the other fare the worse: yet the mystical sense is very easy, for God is neither narrow-hearted nor strait-handed; he can embrace infinite Souls, and reward innumerable observances: He neither despises one when he loves another, nor is disabled to requite an old Servant when he shews favour to a new Convert. He (like Isaac) hath more than one blessing, so that Jacob need not plot to supplant Esau, nor Esau despair because Jacob hath been first blessed. The Feast of good things God hath prepared is sufficient to accommodate all the Guests whether they come early or late; Heaven is wide enough to hold both the one and the other.

With this consideration our Saviour comforts his Disciples, Joh. 14. 2. *In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told*

you

you before. q. d. I will not deceive you with vain hopes, Heaven is capacious enough to receive all you my Disciples, and though I leave you for the present, there I will entertain you all ; and if there be different degrees of glory, yet no Vessel shall be empty ; every Man shall be as full of happiness as it is possible. Therefore there can be no cause of emulation, no room for discontent where there is no power or capacity unsatisfied. Besides, (as I have shewed already) the society in Heaven is a principal ingredient of the happiness thereof, where blessed Spirits communicate with, delight in, exhilarate and ravish each other : and therefore the more arrive at that state, the more glorious is the appearance, the fuller is the harmony, and the more redoubled and multiplied are the reflections of joy and blessedness.

Envy is common in this World, where because there is not enough for all, one man's excessive happiness proves the disappointment of the hopes of another ; for the same Wheel that brings one Man up must cast another down : And the Courts of Princes are full of Jealousies, Rivalties and Emulations, because the hearts of the greatest Men are narrow, and cannot admit several Competitors in any eminent degree of sincere affection. But where both these and all other causes of discontent are removed, that is, where the heart and good will of God, who confers this happiness, is infinite ; where the powers of those that receive it are enlarged ; where the objects to be enjoyed are unlimited and unmeasurably great ; and lastly, where the duration is Eternal ; no wrong is done to one man when another is happy as well as himself, nor can any complaint, murmur, or animosity enter there.

3. But

3. But thirdly, if it appear that there was great reason why the Father should thus dispose, then his Apology is the more perfect, and the murmurs of the elder Brother utterly absurd. Now for this the Father adds, *It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy Brother was dead and is alive again, &c.* As if he had said, "Son, though the Prerogative of a Father ought to bear down the pretensions of a Son, and I might without your leave dispose as I will of my own, yet I have taken care of your interest as well as of mine own authority, and have shewed you that your Brothers gain shall not be your loss; and now I will condescend further to you, and shew you what equitable considerations there were on the part of your Brother, which made it becoming my wisdom to do as I have done.

"In the first place, when I saw in how sad and pitiful a plight your poor Brother was, (who was my own flesh and blood as well as your self) and thereby collected what hardships he had undergone, I should have forgotten my self as well as him, and not have deserved the name of Father, if seeing his contrition as well as his distress, I had not had compassion on him. *Τὴν ἰσχυρὰν πένεσιν; ἡδυνάμην μὴ ἐλεῶσαι τὸν υἱὸν ὑπὲρ περὶ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ, οὐ κείνον ὁ θυμὸς μου ἀλλ' ὁ πόνος τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ. ἀπὸ τῆς πένεσιν τῆς διαπορεύσεως, ἡ δύναμις μὴ ἐλεῶσαι δι' ἵνα ἰσχύω, &c.* St. Chrysost.

When (saith the Father) I saw my Son, observed his submission, and heard his humble address, what could I do less than I did? was it in my power not to pity my own Son? be thou judge that art angry at it. It was not in my nature to be cruel to him that proceeded from my own loins, &c. "And by the favours which you

" see

“ see I have conferred upon him, I have not only melted down all the hardness of his heart, and assured him to my self for the future against all relapses, but also set open a door of hope to others of my family (if ever such a case should happen again) that they may have no invincible temptation to be obstinate and incurable. And if perchance you may think that by this means I as well incourage others to rebel as to return, I tell you that I for my part had rather (if it must be so) that many should presume upon my goodness, than that one should despair of mercy; since the latter would seem to perish by my default, but the other only by their own folly.

“ And again, when I considered how difficult a matter it is for any that are once intangled in a course of sin to disengage themselves again, because *rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft*; and that to sip of the Cup of meer liberty is intoxicating, and stirs up an unquenchable thirst after more: that there are charms in debauchery, and the Lips of an whorish Woman are shares and bird-lime; when, I say, I consider that a young Man who hath once cast off the awe and reverence of his Father, and the reins of Government, is like the Raven out of the Ark, who though she found not where to set her foot, but saw the face of all things full of horror and desolation, yet hovered to and fro, and returned not to the Ark again; and I have observed the way of riot and licentiousness usually to end in Death, and the very mouth of Hell: I was therefore not only seized with admiration, and transported with joy to see your Brother emerge out of all these difficulties; but I thought it fit

“ to

“ to set up a monument of so rare an accident,
 “ and to place some marks of favour upon him,
 “ that had with such resolution broke through
 “ and recovered.

“ Moreover, (saith the Father) as this event
 “ was rare and extraordinary in it self, so it will
 “ have a very happy influence upon the reputation
 “ of my Family and Government ; for as insuc-
 “ cessful rebellions in the conclusion tend to the
 “ greatning of the Prince or State, from whom the
 “ secession was made, so this return of my Son will
 “ repair the honour of my discipline and manage-
 “ ment as much as his miscarriage had aspersed it.
 “ And lastly, I have great reason to believe that
 “ he who hath made trial of all things, and knows
 “ so thoroughly both the miseries that attend an ex-
 “ travagant course, and the good and comfort (as
 “ well as the burdens) of obedience, and hath by
 “ the severity of the former been driven to return
 “ to the latter, will for ever after prove most du-
 “ tiful and governable: Wherefore upon the
 “ whole matter I think there is just grounds for
 “ my joy at my Son's return, and that you should
 “ rejoyce also.

And now this Apology of the Father suggests to
 us these four things in justification of the divine
 Wisdom as well as his Goodness, in bestowing all
 the unspeakable favours (mentioned in the former
 Chapters) upon penitent sinners.

1. *The great interests and happy influence of such demonstrations of kindness.*
2. *The extream difficulty, and consequently the rarity of such recoveries make it very well worth a memorial when any such thing happens.*
3. *It*

3. It is a vast honour to Religion, and demonstrates both the efficacy of its methods, and the comfortableness and sureness of its encouragements when such persons are reclaimed.

Lastly, Such persons are commonly very eminent and remarkably usual afterwards, and therefore are fit objects of the divine bounty.

1. First, Such demonstrations of favour and kindness to penitent sinners is greatly the interest of God's Family and Kingdom, in order both to the bringing men into it, and to the assuring their station therein. For God (as we have said heretofore) neither forcibly draws any into his service, nor violently detains them in his Family, but leaves them to the exercise of their own liberty; his people are a willing people, and that obedience is not worthy of God that is not voluntary and chearful. Therefore it is necessary that he propound great and mighty motives and inducements, that so he may out-bid the Devil, and convince the minds of men that it is their interest as well as their duty, to forsake sin, to turn to God, and to adhere to him.

The Founder of Rome that he might quickly furnish it with Inhabitants, made it an *Asylum* or Sanctuary to all that were in danger or distress, that so men finding that security, and those advantages abroad which they could not expect at home, might make that their Country where they found best entertainment. Not unlike to this is the meaning of our Saviour in the Parable of the King which made a Marriage Feast for his Son, and having invited his Guests, but they refusing, he

Mat. 22. 2.
Luk. 14
16.

he sends his Servants into the High-ways and Hedges, commanding them to bring those in which they found there, *that his house might be furnished with guests*; not doubting but partly the great necessity such persons were in, and partly the honour and happiness of such an entertainment would *compel them to come in*. Upon this account God propounds not only pardon of sin, but all the forementioned inestimable benefits to repenting sinners, as well as to those *just men that need no repentance*.

And although it be certain, that God hath neither such need of men's service, as to oblige him to resort to these great inducements; and it be also very true, that there are but a small number of those that make up the Quire in glory, who upon such motives were converted from extreme debauchery: yet such is the graciousness of the good Shepherd, that he *carries the lost Sheep home on his Shoulders rejoicing*; and such is the goodness of God, that he sticks not at this price for the redemption of any one Soul. Besides, it is to be considered, that as we noted from the Historian formerly, *Difficile est in tot humanis erroribus solâ innocentia vivere*, that though no good Subject will voluntarily transgress the laws of his Country, and fall into the displeasure of the Prince, yet the most wary and inoffensive person, that is most secure of his own integrity, would desire to live under such a government where there was room for mercy and pardon if he should offend; and the best of men are so sensible of the power of temptation, and the slipperiness of their station (as well as conscious of their own sincerity) that they are marvellously comforted and encouraged

raged by this admirable grace and goodness of God to Sinners.

And whereas the fear of Hell might be thought sufficient both to reclaim sinners from their evil ways, and to preserve good men from apostasie, we shall find upon due consideration, that fear, let it be of what object it will, is neither so lasting a principle, nor so potent and effective a motive as hope; for this last raises generosity, inflames the mind, spirits all the powers, despises or glories in difficulty; and therefore all wise men employ this Engine, (especially in all great Enterprizes) and endeavour to make men's hopes greater than their fears, and so order the matter, that those they employed may have a prospect of so great a good by success in their attempts, as shall outweigh all their apprehensions of difficulty or danger in the atchievement. And this will be the more remarkable if we observe in that famous encounter of *David* with *Goliath* the Giant of *Gath*, 1 Sam. 17, 26, & c. that although there was doubtless some extraordinary impulse upon *David's* heart to undertake that business, yet the holy Text intimates that he listened to the discourses of the people, and was inflamed by the general assurance was given him of a mighty and glorious reward to him that should effect it. Since therefore the proposition of great and glorious hopes is so necessary, not only to draw men off from the present allurements of sin, and to dissolve the charms of sense which habituate sinners are bound in; but also to comfort and encourage even good men themselves, and to engage both the one and the other in a generous course of vertue: the

C c

Divine

Divine Majesty considering he hath to do with men, and resolving to deal with them agreeably to their natures, thinks it as well becoming his wisdom as his goodness, not only to proclaim impunity to his rebels upon their submission, but to assure them of the highest favours and preferments in the Court of Heaven.

2. Secondly, the extream difficulty, and consequently the wonderfull rarity of examples of great sinners recovered to sincere piety makes such happy accidents deserve to be solemnized with the greater joy and triumph. S. Gregory Nazianzen making an Oration in Commemoration of S. Cyprian, as well reports his flagitious Life before his Conversion to Christianity, as his admirable vertues and piety afterwards, and makes the former a shadow to heighten and set off the latter.

Greg. Naz.
Orat. 18.

For (saith he) οὐ γὰρ ἔτι μίαν, πῶς ἀγαθὴ διακοσάσαι ὡς τὸ καινοτομῆσαι, διαφέρει τὸ μὴ γὰρ τῆς συνθέας, τὸ δὲ τῆς αἰσχυρίας, καὶ τὸ μὴ ὅτι πολλοῖς ὑπάρχειν, τὸ δὲ ὅλως παρὰ φύσιν. It is nothing so great a matter to maintain the Character of a good man when a man hath once attained to it, as to begin a whole new course of piety; for now the one is but to be like a man's self, and to pursue a custom or habit; but the other requires a virtuous choice, and a manly resolution able to bear down former habits, and therefore there are but few examples of the one, but many of the other.

Indeed, it is an unspeakable advantage to be early engaged in the ways of vertue, for then by reason of the easiness of doing good, which is consequent of custom, a man seems to be under
Θεία μοίρα, a divine fate, a peculiar predestinati-

on to happiness; and therefore (if it be well considered) there is nothing in all a Man's whole life that he hath greater reason to thank God for, than that good providence of his which takes hold of our tender years, and forms them to a sense of Religion: for hereby sin is made dreadfull to our Consciences, and upon the matter Vertue is as easie as Vice, and the narrow way to Heaven as ready to our feet as the broad way of destruction. But on the other side, *Revocare gradus hic labor, hoc opus*; to reduce an old dislocation is very painful, to put off the old man, to change customs, to cast out *Satan* out of his old possession must be very difficult, and require a very brave and generous resolution.

And although to omnipotent power all things are alike easy, yet forasmuch as God not only speaks after the manner of men, but also proceeds ordinarily by the course of natural causes, and doth not supersede their activity, but assist them proportionably to their natures, it must needs (notwithstanding the divine grace) be a very difficult thing to recover an old and deplorable sinner, in whom all the powers of the mind are enfeebled, the sense of Conscience stupified, and the very *Synteresis* and natural notions of the Soul are corrupted, and consequently a thorough reformation of such a person is like to life from the grave, and must needs draw after it, not only the eyes and admiration of men, but also the vexation of Hell, and make the Devil rage as disappointed of the prey he thought himself sure of, but especially must produce joy in Heaven, and amongst the holy Angels.

It can indeed be no surprizal to Almighty God who fore-knows all things from the beginning, and is as far from admiration as from mutability of passions (both which proceed from shortness of understanding) nor to our Lord *Jesus Christ* now in glory; for we see that whilst he was upon Earth he knew when vertue proceeded from him to cure the Woman of her inveterate distemper. But whereas Men are wont to make some passionate expressions of their resentment of every new and admirable event, God thinks fit also in such an extraordinary recovery as this we are speaking of to set up a Monument, Crowning him that overcomes the aforesaid difficulties with immortal glory: inasmuch as such a vertue though it run a shorter race, yet by reason of the aforesaid difficulties it encounters withall, equals if not exceeds that of the earliest setting out, and the longest course.

3. Thirdly, it pleaseth God so plentifully to reward those that come into his Vineyard at the last hour, and to make the condition of sincere Converts equal to that of those who continued always in his service, because the return of such demonstrates both the excellency of vertue, the great comforts of Religion, and the mighty efficacy of the methods of the Gospel.

To begin with that first which we named last, what can be a more irrefragable proof of the power of the Gospel, than to see Men who were given up to all debauchery, abandoned of all true reason, drowned in sensuality, careless of Eternity; in a word, *dead in trespasses and sins*, recover their right minds, and come to life again?

Doth

Doth not this evince that which the foolish World called foolishness, to be *the power of God to salvation*? Doth it not bear an illustrious testimony to that divine institution in shewing such effects of it as all Philosophy and humane Rhetorick despaired of? To preserve those that are in health is valuable, but to recover the sick, and especially to raise the dead is admirable. To civilize some part of Mankind is all that humane wisdom can pretend to; but to make Men substantially and compleatly vertuous, to alter Men's tempers, to correct their course, to reclaim the desperate, to make lewd and profligate Wretches become grave, and sober, and chaste, and holy: this is a notable atchievement, and this is the pretence of the Gospel, and such Converts as we speak of verifiy all its pretensions. Is it not therefore agreeable to the divine wisdom to cast a glory upon that which glorifies the wisdom of his invention?

And then for the other point, that by such Conversions as we speak of, the native excellency of Religion, and the solidity of the comforts of vertue, are demonstrated to be above all the gaudy out-side and empty Pageantry of the World, or all the temptations to sin whatsoever, is clear as the light, since these Men who have made experiment of both, forsake the one for the other; and having found the reasonableness of its injunctions, the plainness and evenness of its path, and the certainty of its upshot, the present comforts, and the future rewards, stick firmly and immoveably to vertue.

The Apostle S. Peter, *Ep. 2. Chap. 2^a Vers. 20*, tells us, that if after a man hath escaped the pollutions of the world through our Lord Jesus Christ, he be again intangled therein, and overcome, the latter end of such a man is worse than the beginning; and that it had been better for him not to have known the way of righteousness, than after he hath known it to turn from the holy commandment, &c. And S. Paul complains of the Galatians, as if they seemed to be bewitched, that having begun in the Spirit they would go about to end in the flesh, *Gal. 3. 1, 3*. For besides that such Apostasies render their second recovery most desperate, having eluded all the divine methods, they also sadly aggravate their own guilt, *Trampling under foot the blood of the Covenant*; giving the lie to God, and belying their own Consciences in going cross to the convictions of their reason, and their experience of the comforts of Religion; in which doing they cannot seem other than enchanted or infatuated. On the other side, those that having tried all the pleasures of sin, and considered and cast up all the gains of the Devil's service, forsake him and seriously devote themselves from thenceforth to God and his holy ways, utterly disparage the Kingdom of Satan, and betray the secret weakness, the falshood, the beggery and tyranny thereof. Namely, they declare that the Devil performs not what he promises, nor sin what it pretends to; that all the allurements of ease, mirth, pleasure, profit, which men were drawn to sin by, were nothing but vain boasts, all cheat and imposture. And they confute all the scandals cast upon Religion, all the calumnies against

against God, (as if he were an hard Master) and answer all the objections which men take up against his service, (as difficult or uncomfortable) as proceeding from meer cowardise and effeminacy of spirit. Wherefore since such men who heretofore like *Sampson* whilst their locks were shorn, and their Eyes put out, made sport for those Philistins the infernal spirits; now calling upon God, and collecting themselves in one great effort subvert the very Pillars of that Kingdom; and by this last act, giving a more fatal blow to it than otherwise they could have done in all their lives, it seems good to God to Crown them as if they had always fought under his Banners, as well as assisted his Conquest at the last.

4. Lastly, Such men as have formerly lived flagitiously and wickedly, and are at last brought over effectually to hearty Piety and Devotion, prove commonly very eminent and remarkable for several virtues, to such

Μετὰ δ' αὖτε καὶ
πενίας (scil. ἐλαίῳ)
εἰς τὸ σῶμα ἵκηται ὅτι
τὴν συμφορὰν εἰ-
σὶ βαλῆται. Athenæus
Deipnosoph. l. 13.

a degree, as is scarcely attainable or imitable by any others. And therefore though they come in late, they are Crowned with the first. Namely, such persons are generally extraordinary humble and modest in their sense of themselves, they are very charitable and free from censoriousness and severe reflection upon others, they are exceeding watchfull and cautious for the time to come, they have both a great compassion to the Souls of men of whom there is any hope of recovery, and they have a wonderfull zeal of God's glory; which things together render them both very beautifull in the Eyes of God, and very usefull in the

World. They are very modest and humble, as reflecting upon their former miscarriages, and being ashamed of themselves, their present attainments do not puff them up, by reason they *have a thorn in the flesh*; a fresh and quick sense of their former follies and disobedience; they remember that when they were lately *in their blood*, *God said to them, Live.* And this makes them not only most highly to admire and adore the riches of God's grace to them, that he snatcht them as a brand out of the fire; but also exceedingly contented with any condition of life his providence thinks fit to put them in. "Let those (saith the Convert) "who never defiled
 "their Garments, stand upon their own justification, and plead their own righteousness; for
 "my part, *mine is but filthy rags*: If I had not
 "found a mercifull God and a gracious Saviour,
 "I had perished everlastingly. And if
 "there be any can think God a Debtor to them,
 "they may expostulate with him about his providence;
 "but I of all men have least reason to
 "do it, who *am less than the least of all his mercies.*
 "Now these things containing a full compliance with all God's designs, and being the most real advancement of his glory, must needs be very acceptable to him.

Again, in consequence of this humble sense of himself, the Convert is also the most charitable and favourable Judge of others, and the furthest from censoriousness. There is nothing more unbecoming that modesty which should be in all men, than to be critical and curious in espying the failing of others; and nothing can be more

arro-

arrogantly done towards God, than to take the judgment out of his hand, and place our selves in the Tribunal : nay, there is nothing more infects the peace of the World than this pragmatistical humour of censoriousness ; but (saith the Convert)

" Let those that are without sin cast the first stone

" at others ; for my part I have enough to do at

" home, and see more evil in my self than in all

" the World besides : I have learnt of the Apo-

" stle to Speak evil of no man, considering that I

" my self was sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived,

" serving divers lusts and pleasures, Tit. 3. 3.

Thus he composes himself to be an example to the

World of that temper, than which nothing is

more conducent to better the estate of man-

kind ; he will not rake in men's wounds, nor rip

up their old sores, but forgives as he hopes to be

forgiven ; he will not give ear to malicious whi-

spers, which like *the arrow of the pestilence flies*

in the dark, and kills without noise : he will en-

tertain no uncharitable surmises, but hopes the

best ; nor aggravate men's follies, but makes the

most benign and candid interpretation that the

case can bear ; and thus not *judging others, he shall*

not be condemned of the Lord. Nay further, the

Convert is so far from all the aforesaid instances

of uncharitableness, that he is the most compas-

sionate man in the World, both towards those

that are yet in a state of sin, and those also who

have stumbled and fallen in their race of Vertue,

and the most ready and officious to bring the for-

mer to an apprehension of his danger, and to re-

store the latter *in the spirit of meekness* : he knows

the wretchedness of a sinful condition ; he hath

felt the pangs of a guilty Conscience ; his heart

trembles at the thoughts of Hell, and therefore

his

his Soul is troubled for those that are insensible of their own Case; his Bowels yern, his Eyes weep in secret, and his Heart bleeds for them; he counsels, persuades, forewarns them, prays for them, and as the Prophet towards the Widows Son, he as it were *stretches himself upon their dead Souls*, and by the application of a lively example, endeavours to bring spiritual warmth and life into them. And now it cannot be imagined that such affection to Souls should be unrewarded by the great lover of Souls our *Lord Jesus*.

Besides, it is not to be doubted but the Convert who hath this compassion to the Souls of others, will be infinitely cautious of indangering his own; he knows the Devil *continually goes about as a roaring Lion seeking whom he may devour*; he understands how many artifices and stratagems he hath to deceive Souls, and is sensible how full the World is of charms and allurements; he is well aware of the Pit which he hath but lately escaped; and therefore is always watchful and solicitous of himself, careful to resist beginnings, and cautious of all appearance of evil; and in all these things his care and circumspection surpasses that of those happy Men who never foully miscarried. "No (saith he) let those
 " be secure that never knew what danger was but
 " in contemplation only; 'tis not for me to live
 " at ease, it was too much to hazard a Soul once,
 " God forbid I should do it again; O my heart
 " akes at the very danger it hath escaped! me-
 " thinks I am not yet safe till I am in Heaven!
 " stand upon thy guard O my Soul! keep God
 " in thy Eye! trust not thyself a moment, but
 " in his and thy own keeping.

Lastly,

Lastly, (to add no more) such a person hath constantly in his bosom a burning zeal of God's glory, which the consideration of God's wonderful mercy to him hath kindled in him. He therefore *loves much, because much was forgiven him*; others that have not incurred such dangers, nor been sensible of such deliverances, cannot have such raised affections as he hath. They do not *hunger and thirst after righteousness* as he doth, find not that savour and relish in the means of grace that he feels, perceive not those obligations upon themselves to redeem their time, and repair their former omissions by a double diligence in God's service.

In consideration of all these things together (to which several others might have been added of like nature) the *Jews* have a saying in their *Talmud*, *That the most just and perfect men cannot be able to stand in judgment with the Penitents*; and a *Rabine* of theirs Commenting upon that saying, adds further, *That no Creature, no not the very Angels themselves that never sinned, are able to compare with them*. But most assuredly (without *Hyperbole*) they are by all the qualifications fore-mentioned, prepared for vessels of honour, fit objects of the divine favour, and shall be received with the joy and triumph of Angels, and all the Celestial Host into those glorious Mansions, whither *Christ Jesus* the Friend of Penitent Sinners, and the Author of Eternal Salvation is gone before. To whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory and adoration World without end. *Amen.*

THE END.

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